

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



JOHN MILTON:

A Biography.

ESPECIALLY DESIGNED TO EXHIBIT THE ECCLESIASTICAL
PRINCIPLES OF THAT ILLUSTRIOUS MAN.

BY

CYRUS R. EDMONDS.



ADMIRATIONE TE POTIUS ET IMMORTALIBUS LAUDIBUS, ET SI NATURA
SUPPEDITET ÆMULATIONE DECOREMUS.

Tacitus.

LONDON :

ALBERT COCKSHAW, 41, LUDGATE HILL.

AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1851.

9387
F 236
jo

REED AND PARDON,
PRINTERS,
LOVELL'S COURT, PATERNOSTER ROW.

PREFACE.

THE present Bishop of Winchester, in fulfilling the duty that was honourably imposed upon him, of editing a posthumous production of England's greatest Epic Poet, makes the following observation:—"There is much reason for regretting that the prose works of Milton—where, in the midst of much that is coarse and intemperate, passages of such redeeming beauty occur—should be in the hands of so few readers; considering the advantage which might be derived to our literature from the study of their original and nervous eloquence."

Several obvious reasons may account for this neglect; and the first of these is, that a somewhat repulsive influence obstructs the inquirer at the very threshold of this rare but almost unexplored cabinet of British literature.

The very names of many of Milton's prose works present themselves to all but the learned, as an array of quaint forms, which frown upon the uninitiated. Their style, like the waters of the fabled stream, is turbid with the grains of classic gold; and the literary habits of the writer were so closely connected with ancient and foreign literature, as to deprive his writings of that strictly national character which is essential to a wide popularity.

But a further and a still more potent cause has concealed the writings of Milton from the careful inspection of his

countrymen. It has been said of the Puritans, that, like the victorious lion, they were depicted by their opponents. And so it has fared with Milton. His most eminent biographers, as members of the Church of England, have had no sympathy with their illustrious subject in the grandest phase which his character and his writings present.

Milton, unequalled as a poet, and memorable and exemplary as a statesman, was most especially a Nonconformist, an advocate of religious freedom, unshackled by secular and political interference;—in a word, a Puritan, in all but those excesses of untempered zeal which historians and satirists have combined to exaggerate, in order to dim the historic lustre they cannot hide, and to throw contempt on a cause which must rise proportionately with the elevation and advancement of mankind.

It is the purpose of the following pages to present Milton afresh to the public as the champion of political, and especially of religious liberty; and, while delineating the few incidents of his life, to present such passages from his prose writings, especially on ecclesiastical subjects, as may invite the attention of the public to the whole of those much-neglected but immortal productions.

All the circumstances of the present times, and particularly the events which, in the religious world, have of late been thickening around us, compel the attention of society to those fundamental principles which Milton so sublimely developed and illustrated.

To assist in guiding this movement of the popular mind to the study of the works of Milton, is the earnest aim of this biography: and if it should subserve this end, its author will be content that his own labours should be disregarded or forgotten.

June, 1851.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
Scantiness of the Material offered by Men like Milton to the mere Biographer—Great Men produced in Ages of Transition—General Features of the Age in which Milton lived—Effects of the Reformation—Retention of the Essence of Popery—Alliance of the Church with the State .	1

CHAPTER II.

Birth and Parentage of Milton—Notice of his Father—Early Education and Habits of the Son—His earliest extant Poem—Enters the University of Cambridge—His Poems and Exercises at College—Calumnies against his Morals at this Period—His Refutation of them—His Reasons for declining the Clerical Profession—Notice of Dr. Johnson's Observations thereon	7
---	---

CHAPTER III.

Milton's Residence at Horton—Composes the Comus—Lycidas—Arcades—L'Allegro—Il Penseroso—Death of his Mother—Ambitious Aspirations—Visits Italy, and is received with great distinction—His Address to Manso—Remarks of Mr. Macaulay on his Latin Versification .	21
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

Milton contemplates the Production of an Epic Poem—Visits Galileo—Returns to England—Notice of Dr. Johnson's Disparaging Remarks—Milton's Justification of himself—Publishes his Treatise of Reformation in England—Analysis of the work—Noble Invocation at the close . . .	35
--	----

CHAPTER V.

- Milton publishes his Treatises "On Prelatical Episcopacy,"
and "The Reason of Church Government urged against
Prelacy," in Answer to Bishop Hall and Archbishop Usher
—Criticism on their Style—Analysis of both Treatises . 57

CHAPTER VI.

- Milton publishes his "Animadversions on the Remonstrants'
Defence"—The most striking Passage from this Work—
The Episcopalian claim to the right of Ordination—Ap-
pearance of the "Modest Confutation"—Milton replies
in the "Apology for Smeectymnuus"—Analysis of the
Work—Defence of the Parliament—Relics of Rome in the
Anglican Church 75

CHAPTER VII.

- Milton's Marriage—Is deserted by his Wife—Publishes his
Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce—Effect of the exist-
ing Laws on Personal Religion—Their Bearing on Chris-
tian Liberty—Publication of the Judgment of Martin
Bucer concerning Divorce—The Tetrachordon—The
Colasterion 90

CHAPTER VIII.

- State of Religious Parties in England—Persecutions by Laud
and the Courts of High Commission and Star Chamber—
Persecuting Bigotry of the Presbyterians—Meeting of the
Westminster Assembly—The Solemn League and Cove-
nant—Catastrophe of the Royal Cause—Repentance and
Return of Milton's Wife—He publishes his Treatise on
Education—Analysis of the Work 101

CHAPTER IX.

- Milton publishes his "Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed
Printing"—Analysis of the Work—Noble Passages occur-
ring in it—Discharge of Mabbot, the Licenser, at his own
request 115

CHAPTER X.

- Milton's Sonnets—Domestic Incidents—Conduct of the Pres-

byterians—Publication of the “Tenure of Kings and Magistrates”—Eulogies on Fairfax, Vane, and Bradshaw—Analysis of the Treatise on the “Tenure of Kings and Magistrates”	127
--	-----

CHAPTER XI.

Observations on the Articles of Peace—Manifesto of the Presbytery at Belfast—Milton composes Four Books of his English History—Is appointed Latin Secretary under Cromwell—Selection from his Letters of State—Persecution of the Waldenses—His successful Efforts in their behalf—His Sonnet on the Massacre in Piedmont	147
---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

Publication of the Eikon Basilikè—Authorship of the Eikon—Milton Replies in the Eikonoklastes—Publication of the Royal Defence by Salmasius—Milton replies in his First Defence of the People of England—Description of the Work and of its Effects—The most striking Passages from the Defence of the People of England	161
--	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

Domestic Changes—Birth of Two Children to Milton—Death of his Wife—Suffers the Loss of Sight—His Letter to Leonardi Philaras, the Athenian, detailing the History of the Disease—His Magnanimity and pious Resignation—Sonnet on his Blindness—His Second Marriage, and Second Bereavement of his Wife and her Infant Child—Sonnet on his deceased Wife	174
---	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

Publication of the “Regii Sanguinis Clamor”—The Second Defence of the People of England—Character of the Puritans—Eulogy on Christina of Sweden—The First Defence unrewarded with Money—Vindication of the Protector—Eulogy on Cromwell	182
---	-----

CHAPTER XV.

Consequences of the Death of Cromwell—Milton publishes	
--	--

	PAGE
the "Treatise of the Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes."	
—Analysis of the Work—Publishes the "Considerations touching the likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church"—Analysis of the Work	202

CHAPTER XVI.

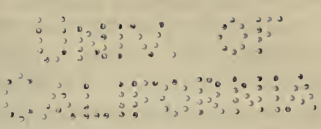
Effects of Political Revolutions—Fickleness of the Army—Milton publishes his Tracts upon the Commonwealth—Analysis of these Treatises—Restoration of Charles II.—Milton is secreted by his Friends—Passing of the Act of Oblivion	215
---	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

Milton's Changes of Residence—His Third Marriage—His Connexion with Ellywood—Removal to Chalfont—Completes the "Paradise Lost"—Early History of this Poem—Letter to Heimbach—"Paradise Regained"—"Samson Agonistes"	226
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

Milton publishes his Treatise of "True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration," &c.—Analysis of the Work—Minor Publications—Recent Discovery of the two Books "On the Knowledge and the Service of God"—Notice of the main Doctrines asserted in the Work—Milton's Religious Character—His Death—Description of his Person and Habits—Conclusion	238
--	-----



CHAPTER I.

SCANTINESS OF THE MATERIAL OFFERED BY MEN LIKE MILTON TO THE
MERE BIOGRAPHER—GREAT MEN PRODUCED IN AGES OF TRANSITION—
GENERAL FEATURES OF THE AGE IN WHICH MILTON LIVED—EFFECTS
OF THE REFORMATION—RETENTION OF THE ESSENCE OF POPERY—
ALLIANCE OF THE CHURCH WITH THE STATE.

IT is a condition, at which it is futile to repine, belonging to those who in all ages have been born to guide a country amidst the stormy vicissitudes of a revolution, that they can be but little known as individuals to succeeding generations. Such men can scarcely be said to have, during their active years, a personal and private life. Scarcely any of those who are either desirous or capable of transmitting to posterity the portraiture of the MAN, have close and frequent access to the leaders, whether military or civil, of national transition. And as little, too, have those heroes such close and leisurely access to themselves, as admits of their giving to mankind that most valuable of biographies which can be best, if not solely, recorded by the individual, and which would exhibit the development of those inner principles which, ultimately embodied in their public acts, have influenced or decided the destinies of their country. The biography of such men is, for the most part, little else than a fragment of the history of their times.

To those who can appreciate the loftiest intellectual powers, sustained by vast learning, and enriched with the

rarest treasures of fancy; and moral majesty, relieved of its sternness by the tenderest affections of the heart, it must ever be matter of regret that John Milton is one of those whose intimacy they cannot enjoy through the familiar introduction of biography. We are, indeed, ushered by history near enough to his presence to pay our homage; but we can never be presented with that audience of his conversation, and those charming glimpses of his privacy, which have perpetuated the domestic life of so many inferior men, and which, especially in the case of the most eminent, but most unjust of his biographers, has brought us as well acquainted with Dr. Johnson as with our daily associates.

The life of Milton may be divided into three epochs, the occupations of each of which were unfavourable to the interest of a pure biography. The first was spent in amassing those stores of learning which were to his vast intellect what machinery is to motive power. The second, after a brief but romantic interval of travel, was occupied with political and polemical controversy, and with public and official affairs; and the third was spent in a retirement rendered sacred alike by genius and sorrow, in which, from the aggregate resources of his knowledge, and the chastened, yet undiminished, powers of his fancy, he produced the great epic of the English language. Such a life can only be graduated by mental and literary landmarks. Its historical events were few; and, had they been ever so numerous, or ever so prominent, they would have been lost in the splendour of his intellectual career. In such a life, the dates of works as lasting as language, take the place which, in other lives, is occupied by waning victories and dubious and perishable honours.

The main purpose of these pages, however, is to circumscribe the biography of Milton within a still narrower compass. In reproducing to the public the incidents of his life, our chief design will be to develop, and that mainly, in his own stately and impressive language, the principles

and views which he maintained on ecclesiastical subjects. These, indeed, formed the staple of his intellectual history. A considerable portion of his prose writings is devoted to the maintenance of these principles; while, even in those treatises which are purely political, we incessantly find the evidence, not only of his nonconformity to the episcopalian system in general, but especially of his deep-seated aversion to the alliance of any system of belief and worship with the more coarse, unspiritual, and heterogeneous powers of the state.

It was the lot of Milton to flourish in an era of transition; and it is remarkable, though by no means unaccountable, that such times, throughout the history of the world, have produced the men who have most powerfully influenced the destinies of their own age and all succeeding generations. It was amidst the stormiest periods of Grecian history that we find those historians, orators, statesmen, and generals, who at once rescued their age and their memory from oblivion; and it was amidst the transitions of the Roman commonwealth and empire that those minds were nurtured, who, in all the highest pursuits allotted to man, illustrated their age and their species together, and whose writings have nurtured the youth, and attracted the universal admiration of all succeeding times. Almost within our own recollection the overthrow of political and spiritual despotism in France was heralded and attended by minds such as that nation had not been wont to gaze at and applaud, nor the sounder portion of the civilized world to weigh and estimate.

Times, in many respects similar, witnessed the birth and history of JOHN MILTON. The revival of letters by the invention of the art of printing had previously communicated an unexampled impulse to the human mind. The papal religion had heretofore gathered its spoils and consolidated its empire amidst a darkness only broken by occasional rays of art, and occasional luminaries of learning. With what

a cold obliqueness these fell upon the popular mind, let the history of the middle ages testify. In spite of the wild or affected fantasies of the day, it becomes thinking men to designate these as *the dark ages*. That their institutions preserved to us the treasures of ancient literature, is, indeed, true; but they preserved them in a coffer of which few ecclesiastics kept the keys, and fewer still used them, save for the purpose of drawing forth and perpetuating monastic rubbish.

This darkness, and the delusions which it harboured, had in this country been partly dispelled by the Reformation. I say partially; for few readers need be told that in England the principles of the Reformation were but imperfectly carried out. Commenced under a monarch who was one of the basest and most unprincipled of mankind, it was carried on by two parties of whom it is difficult to say which was the more unfavourable to the interests of religion and freedom—the one being solely interested in obtaining the largest measure of secular spoil, and the other in securing the greatest number of the people to aggrandize the power and state of a new but homogeneous hierarchy. The Reformation was a compromise between these parties, and those who desired to restore to the church its primitive purity and simplicity of faith and worship; but the construction of the scheme indicates far more of Jesuitical subtlety than of the Christian manliness of the great reformers. The scheme of the Anglican church propitiated the Protestants by presenting the Scriptures, and adopting various formularies of public worship, in the vernacular language; by abjuring the infallibility of the pope, the adoration of the Virgin, the invocation of saints and angels, the sacrifice of the mass, and the doctrine of meritorious works. But its authors retained and re-established so much of the essence of popery as well-nigh nullified the abjurations. Admitting a priesthood and an altar, they implied a sacrifice; they invested that priesthood with imaginary gifts

descending by direct transmission from the apostles, and through this figment found their way to the doctrine of sacramental efficacy. If they denied the infallibility of the pope, they transferred it to the church,* and added to it the still more baneful dogma of the ecclesiastical supremacy of the monarch. While they abjured the mass they so stated the doctrine of the Eucharist, as to admit of its being wrested (as is commonly done in the present day) to the notion of a perpetual oblation. Their Prayer-book was little else than an English translation of the Romish liturgy and offices, teaching men to invoke and commemorate the saints to whom they had ceased to pray, and to continue the vain repetitions and still vainer material observances which popery had ever substituted for the "reasonable service" of the human mind.

The observation of Lord Russell, with regard to the scheme of Henry VIII., requires but little modification to make it applicable to every subsequent period:—"The religion established by Henry," he remarks, "was so far from being the reformed church of Luther, or of Calvin, that he prided himself in maintaining the Roman Catholic faith, after he had shaken off the supremacy of the pope. His ordinances, indeed, vibrated for a short time between the old and the new religion, as he listened more to Cranmer or to Gardiner; but the law of the six articles, which contains the creed he finally imposed on his people, maintains and confirms all the leading articles of the Roman belief."

It might be supposed that a church embodying, though in a diluted form, the tenets of the popish religion, but without the *prestige* of its authority or antiquity, usurping the gorgeous edifices of the Catholic church, but for a worship which was shorn of the splendour which corresponded to them, contained within itself the seeds of rapid dissolution. And, doubtless, its destruction would have been speedy and complete had not its authors moored it safely to the state,

* Article XX: "The Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith."

so that its abolition might involve the perils of a political revolution. This arrangement not only contributed to the solidity of the ecclesiastical despotism, but supplied it with an ample armoury for the subjugation and punishment of all dissentients. It was at the period when Archbishop Laud and his associates, armed with these terrible powers, and "breathing threatenings and slaughter," were devastating the Christian church in this country, that JOHN MILTON was raised up by the providence of God to defend and revive "expiring Liberty."

CHAPTER II.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE OF MILTON—NOTICE OF HIS FATHER—EARLY EDUCATION AND HABITS OF THE SON—HIS EARLIEST EXTANT POEM—ENTERS THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE—HIS POEMS AND EXERCISES AT COLLEGE—CALUMNIES AGAINST HIS MORALS AT THIS PERIOD—HIS REFUTATION OF THEM—HIS REASONS FOR DECLINING THE CLERICAL PROFESSION—NOTICE OF DR. JOHNSON'S OBSERVATIONS THEREON.

JOHN MILTON was born at his father's house, in Bread Street, Cheapside, on the 9th of December, 1608. His father appears, in some respects, to have been worthy to have his name perpetuated by such a son; for, while prosecuting his studies at the University of Oxford, he became convinced of the anti-christian character of the popish religion, and embraced the protestant faith at the sacrifice of his paternal inheritance and his immediate prospects. Having abruptly quitted the University upon this change of his fortunes, he commenced practice in London as a scrivener; and, while procuring the means of giving a high education to his son, he found leisure for the pursuit of various studies, and especially that of music, in which he seems to have attained considerable excellence. This accomplishment his son rated so highly, that he associated it with his own poetic genius and fame, in a Latin poem, subsequently addressed to his father, distinguished as much for its filial piety as for that classic latinity in which Milton has but few rivals in modern times. The passage referred to has been thus translated:—

Nor you affect to scorn the Aonian quire,
Bless'd by their smiles and glowing with their fire.
You! who by them inspired, with art profound,
Can wield the magic of proportion'd sound:
Through thousand tones can teach the voice to stray,
And wind to harmony its mazy way,—
Arion's tuneful heir:—then wonder not
A poet-child should be by you begot,
My kindred blood is warm with kindred flame,
And the son treads his father's track to fame.
Phœbus controls us with a common sway;
To you commends his lyre,—to me his lay:
Whole in each bosom makes his just abode,
With child and sire the same, though varied god.

In answer to some malignant insinuations thrown out in after life by a political adversary, Milton, in his second defence to the people of England, presents with equal brevity and modesty a view of his early history. In this we find the following reference to his boyhood: "My father destined me from a child to the pursuits of literature; and my appetite for knowledge was so voracious, that, from twelve years of age, I hardly ever left my studies or went to bed before midnight. This primarily led to my loss of sight. My eyes were naturally weak, and I was subject to frequent head-aches, which, however, could not chill the ardour of my curiosity, or retard the progress of my improvement. My father had me daily instructed in the Grammar-school, and by other masters at home." Aubrey, also, in his MS. Life of Milton, preserved in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, relates that, "when Milton went to schoole, and when he was very younge, he studied very hard, and sate up very late, commonly till twelve or one o'clock; and his father ordered the maid to sitt up for him." At the age of fifteen, that is, in the year 1623, Milton was admitted to St. Paul's School, and in the same year produced the first poems which have come down to our time; although, from the authority before quoted, we learn that he was a poet at ten years old, at which age his first portrait was executed by Cornelius Jansen.

To those who are interested in tracing in "the child the father of the man," it will be delightful to examine these early productions; just as "the little rill near the source of one of the great American rivers is an interesting object to the traveller who is apprised, as he steps across it, or walks a few miles along its banks, that this is the stream which runs so far, and which gradually swells into so vast a flood."* The poems referred to are versions of the 114th and 136th Psalms. The former of these is inserted as being the shorter, and, perhaps, the more characteristic. Milton afterward translated it into Greek verse.

A PARAPHRASE ON PSALM CXIV.

When the blest seed of Terah's faithful son
 After long toil their liberty had won;
 And pass'd from Pharian fields to Canaan land,
 Led by the strength of the Almighty's hand;
 Jehovah's wonders were in Israel shown,
 His praise and glory was in Israel known.
 That saw the troubled sea, and shivering fled,
 And sought to hide his froth-becurled head
 Low in the earth; Jordan's clear streams recoil,
 As a faint host that hath received the foil.
 The high, huge-bellied mountains skip, like rams
 Amongst their ewes: the little hills, like lambs.
 Why fled the ocean? And why skipt the mountains?
 Why turned Jordan toward his crystal fountains?
 Shake, earth; and at the presence be aghast
 Of Him that ever was, and aye shall last;
 That glassy floods from rugged rocks can crush,
 And make soft rills from fiery flint-stones gush!

In his seventeenth year he commenced his University career at Christ College, Cambridge. For this he was prepared by an extensive acquaintance with classical literature, and a knowledge of several modern languages acquired at St. Paul's School. But it was to the poets that he devoted his chief attention, and for the appreciation of them he modestly lays claim but to one, and that a very subordinate qualification,—an exquisite nicety of ear. It was in this the first

* Foster's Essay on a Man's writing Memoirs of himself.

year of his college life that he wrote his elegy "On the death of a Fair Infant," which is too long for insertion, but which indicates a great advance upon his earlier productions in maturity of mind and in facility of management. It cannot be said of Milton that he ever set any author before him as a model. It is, however, evident that Ovid was the reigning favourite of the youthful poet, and, even amidst the multifarious learning which, as if by a necessity he could not control, crowded the productions of his after life, it is easy to trace the frequent reminiscences of his first love.

At college he was particularly admired for his academical exercises, both in Latin and English verse. The former language he wrote through life with as much ease and force as if it had been his vernacular tongue. In his prose writings, indeed, he never affected a pedantic conformity to the classic models, though in Latin verse his resemblance to them was at once so close and so natural, that Mr. Macaulay justly applies to him a tasteful criticism on Cowley, that "he wore the garb but not the clothes of the ancients."

In the year 1627 he produced a "vacation exercise in the College," of which Todd remarks that, written at the age of nineteen, it has been repeatedly and justly noticed as containing indications of the future bard, "whose genius was equal to a subject that carried him beyond the limits of the world." In the following lines the reader will discern the twilight that heralded the undeclining day of Comus, Il Penseroso, and the Paradise Lost. Addressing the personification of the English language, he writes:—

Yet I had rather, if I were to chuse,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound:
Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at heaven's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity;
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,

Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings
 To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings
 Immortal nectar to her kingly sire :
 Then passing through the spheres of watchful fire,
 And misty regions of wide air next under,
 And hills of snow, and lofts of piled thunder,
 May tell at length how green-eyed Neptune raves,
 In heaven's defiance mustering all his waves ;
 Then sing of secret things that came to pass
 When beldam Nature in her cradle was ;
 And last of kings, and queens, and heroes old,
 Such as the wise Demodocus once told
 In solemn songs at King Alcinous' feast,
 While sad Ulysses' soul, and all the rest,
 Are held, with his melodious harmony,
 In willing chains and sweet captivity.

Two years afterwards he produced his "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity." A hypercritical analysis has detected some fancied faults in this exquisite poem. But if the writers referred to had recollected the age in which (not to say *at* which) it was written, or the canon of candour which a great poetical critic* of antiquity left for the guidance of his successors, they might, perhaps, have spared their ingenuity. It bears a stamp of premature, but conscious, majesty in every verse; while in the very music of such stanzas as the following, there reigns a spirit of silence which is charmingly appropriate, and irresistibly impressive :—

No war, or battle's sound,
 Was heard the world around :
 The idle spear and shield were high uphung ;
 The hooked chariot stood
 Unstain'd with hostile blood ;
 The trumpet spake not to the armed throng ;
 And kings sat still with awful eye,
 As if they surely knew their sov'ran Lord was by.

* Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
 Offendar maculis quas aut incuria fudit,
 Aut humana parum cavit natura.

Horace : De Arte Poetica.

But peaceful was the night,
 Wherein the Prince of Light
 His reign of peace upon the earth began:
 The winds, with wonder whist,
 Smoothly the waters kist,
 Whispering new joys to the wild ocean,
 Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
 While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

The stars, with deep amaze,
 Stand fix'd in steadfast gaze,
 Bending one way their precious influence;

* * * *

The oracles are dumb;
 No voice or hideous hum
 Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
 Apollo, from his shrine,
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
 No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
 Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetick cell.

The lonely mountains o'er,
 And the resounding shore,
 A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
 From haunted spring and dale,
 Edged with poplar pale,
 The parting Genius is with sighing sent:
 With flower-inwoven tresses torn,
 The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

In consecrated earth,
 And on the holy hearth,
 The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint
 In urns and altars round,
 A drear and dying sound
 Affrights the flamens at their service quaint;
 And the chill marble seems to sweat,
 While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.

About the same time he produced the verses written at a "Solemn Musick," which have been made far better known to the present generation by the harmony of Handel than even by the fame of their author. The student who desires

to trace the mental history of Milton, will be interested by the evidences they show of the ripening of his poetic genius, and of that tendency of his mind to the sublimity of sacred subjects, to which we, doubtless, owe the *Paradise Lost*. This is chiefly evinced in the lines in which, speaking of Voice and Verse personified as sisters, he says, that they are

Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce,
And to our high raised phantasy present
That undisturbed song of pure concent
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne,
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout and solemn jubilee :
Where the bright Seraphim, in burning row,
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow ;
And the cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires.

In this passage, as Dr. Symmons observes, we acknowledge some touches prelusive to the *Paradise Lost*.

The prose compositions which have descended to us, produced in the retirement of Milton's college life, are chiefly academical exercises; and five letters, four of which are addressed in Latin to the tutors of his earlier youth, and one in English, the manuscript of which is still preserved in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, written to a friend who had exhorted him to quit the pursuits of literature for the more active occupations of life. Some passages in the latter require to be reproduced here as beautiful indications of the singular loftiness of his sentiments. After designating that time of his life which was "as yet obscure and unserviceable to mankind," and declaring of his present studies that they were "according to the precept of my conscience, which I firmly trust is not without God," he proceeds thus: "If you think, as you said, that too much learning is in fault, and that I have given up myself to dream away my years in the arms of studious retirement, like Endymion with the Moon, as the tale of Latmus goes; yet consider, that if it were no more but the mere love of

learning, whether it proceeds from a principle bad, good, or natural, it could not have held out thus long against so strong opposition on the other side of every kind. For if it be bad, why should not all the fond hopes that forward youth and vanity are fledged with, together with gain, pride, and ambition, call me forward more powerfully than a poor, regardless, and unprofitable sin of curiosity should be able to withhold me, whereby a man cuts himself off from all action, and becomes the most helpless, pusillanimous, and unweaponed creature in the world; the most unfit and unable to do that which all mortals most aspire to, either to be useful to his friends, or to offend his enemies. Or if it be to be thought a natural proneness, there is against that a much more potent inclination inbred, which about this time of a man's life solicits most, the desire of house and family of his own, to which nothing is esteemed more helpful than the early entering into creditable employment, and nothing hindering than his affected solitariness. And though this were enough, yet there is to this another act, if not of pure, yet of refined nature, no less available to dissuade prolonged obscurity, a desire of honour, and repute, and immortal fame, seated in the breast of every true scholar, which all make haste to by the readiest ways of publishing and divulging conceived merits, as well those that shall as those that never shall obtain it. Nature, therefore, would presently work the more prevalent way, if there were nothing but this inferior bent of herself to restrain her. Lastly, the love of learning, as it is the pursuit of something good, it would sooner follow the more excellent and supreme good known and presented, and so be quickly diverted from the empty and fantastic chase of shadows and notions to the solid good flowing from due and timely obedience to that command in the gospel set out by the terrible seizing of him that hid the talent. It is more probable, therefore, that not the endless delight of speculation, but this very consideration of that great command-

ment, does not press forward, as soon as many do, to undergo, but keeps off with a sacred reverence and religious advisement how best to undergo; not taking thought of being late, so it give advantage to be more fit; for those that were latest lost nothing when the master of the vineyard came to give each one his hire."

This letter is enriched with one of Milton's early sonnets, which, in common with the foregoing passage, exhibits that combination of modesty and earnestness of purpose, which is the invariable accompaniment of true greatness. It is as follows:—

How soon has Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career;
But my late Spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear
That some more timely—happy spirits indu'th.
Yet be it less or more or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Towards which time leads me and the will of Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.

In the beginning of the year 1629, Milton took his bachelor's degree, and, in due course, proceeded to that of master of arts, when he finally quitted the university. The bitter enemies whom his subsequent career arrayed against him, have attempted to derive from this, the obscurest period of his life, the means of casting a reflection upon his spotless fame. Much time and labour have been unnecessarily wasted in rebutting these calumnies. I will endeavour to dispose of them with greater brevity. The story of his having been subjected to corporal chastisement at his college, though argued with ridiculous ingenuity by several of his biographers, and treated with equally ridiculous solemnity by Dr. Johnson, does not deserve the notice of any

writer who is not enthralled by a party purpose, and committed to a "foregone conclusion." Even were it possible to suppose that the incident occurred, the foregoing notices sufficiently attest that it must have been undeserved; and the censure must therefore be transferred from the conduct of Milton to the semi-catholic regulations of the university, and the incapacity and caprice of its administrators. But, apart from this, the statement itself rests on no evidence that is deserving of a moment's consideration. The calumniators of Milton chiefly rely upon a line in one of his Latin epistles to his friend, Charles Deodati, which cannot be tortured by any ingenuity to such an interpretation.* In addition to this, it is notorious that the statutes of the university prohibited the infliction of any such punishment upon a student of Milton's age.

It has been further argued, that the distaste which Milton repeatedly indicated to Cambridge, both as a locality unfavourable to the inspirations of poetry, to which, as we have seen, he was passionately devoted, and also as arising from the manners and habits of the university, goes to prove his unpopularity at his college; and one opponent has even been so unscrupulous as to intimate that he was sent away from the university for a time, in consequence of his immorality. It is scarcely necessary to refute a calumny the falsehood of which is so obvious. With respect to the torpifying influence of the local scenery, the testimony of the poet Gray may be added to that of every man of ordinary taste who has been compelled to traverse the wearisome flats of Cambridgeshire.† As to the more serious

* ————— minas perferre magistri,

Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.

† Some of my readers will be reminded of the incurable disgust with which the vicinity of Cambridge affected the late Robert Hall. He once described it in conversation as "Nature *laid out*;" and when alluding to the scarcity of wood in the neighbourhood, and having been reminded of the willows which abound there, characteristically replied, "Yes, Sir, Nature holding out signals of distress!"

portion of the charge, we may safely cite the defensive statements of Milton himself, written at a time when, if false, they were open to a disgraceful refutation from a thousand quarters. In his *Apology for Smectymnuus*, which will hereafter be noticed in its proper place, the following declaration was extorted from him by the malice of his opponents :—" I must be thought, if this libeller (for now he shows himself to be so) can find belief, after an inordinate and riotous youth spent at the university, to have been at length vomited out thence. For which commodious lie, that he may be encouraged in the trade another time, I thank him; for it hath given me an apt occasion to acknowledge publicly, with all grateful mind, that more than ordinary favour and respect which I found above any of my equals at the hands of those courteous and learned men, the fellows of that college wherein I spent some years: who at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many ways how much better it would content them that I would stay; as by many letters full of kindness and loving respect, both before that time and long after, I was assured of their singular good affection towards me. Which being likewise propense to all such as were for their studious and civil life worthy of esteem, I could not wrong their judgments and upright intentions, so much as to think I had that regard from them for other cause, than that I might be still encouraged to proceed in the honest and laudable courses of which they apprehended I had given good proof. And to those ingenuous and friendly men, who were ever the countenancers of virtuous and hopeful wits, I wish the best and happiest things that friends in absence wish one to another." In his "*Second Defense*," published twelve years after the "*Apology for Smectymnuus*," he again asserts the purity of his college life; and affirms, in opposition to his adversary's calumnies, that he passed seven years at the university, pure from every blemish, and in possession of the esteem of the good, till he took with applause his degree

of Master of Arts: that he then retired to his father's house, and left behind him a memory which was cherished with affection and respect by the greater part of the fellows of his college, who had always been assiduous in cultivating his regard.

I have referred to the general conduct of the university at this time as offensive to Milton's moral tastes. In stating this dislike he specially observes upon the practice of acting plays, on the part of those who had entered, or were about to enter upon the duties of the Christian ministry;—"writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antick and dishonest gestures of Trincolos, buffoons, and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had, or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court ladies, their grooms and mademoiselles." This passage affords Dr. Johnson an opportunity of gratifying his splenetic prejudice in the treatise which, with much respect for that extraordinary man, I can only characterize as his infamous life of Milton. After noticing the pleasure which Milton states that he had enjoyed in early life from theatrical entertainments, Dr. Johnson closes his remarks with the following sneer: "Plays were therefore only criminal when they were acted by academics." It is scarcely necessary to point out the disingenuous sophism into which Johnson's bigotry here betrayed him. It was not the circumstance that the plays were acted by academics that offended Milton's sense of propriety, but that they were acted by men ostensibly devoted to the ministry of the gospel. If Dr. Johnson was unable to recognize this distinction, he is to be pitied; but it is hard to conceive that such language should have been written by a man who thoroughly appreciated the licentiousness of the stage in the time of the Stuarts, and who in a later and a purer day, was withheld confessedly by moral considerations from meeting his friend Garrick in the green-room.

That Milton quitted the university without gaining a fellowship, or taking orders, is also the subject of Dr. Johnson's

animadversion. "He went to the university," says the Doctor, "with a design of entering into the Church, but in time altered his mind." The more correct statement would be, that his father desired that the great intellectual powers, of which he gave early promise, should be thus devoted; and it is easy to conceive that the deep religious sentiments of the youth were favourable to this design. But whatever may have been his tendencies at the early age at which he entered the university, more mature reflection induced him to abandon all intention of becoming a clergyman. For this he gives us his own motives in his Treatise entitled "The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy," in the following words:—"The Church, to whose service, by the intentions of my parents and friends I was destined of a child, and in mine own resolutions; till coming to some maturity of years, and perceiving what tyranny had invaded the Church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either straight perjure or split his faith; I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing."

It is recorded of Dr. Johnson, that when asked by a lady who was better instructed in such matters, why he had in his Dictionary given, as the meaning of the word "pastern," "the knee of a horse," he proudly replied, "Ignorance, madam, sheer ignorance." This confession the learned lexicographer could well afford. But it is surprising he should have perilled so great a reputation by publishing the following remarks on this statement of Milton:—"These expressions are, I find, applied to the subscription of the Articles; but it seems more probable that they relate to canonical obedience. I know not any of the Articles which seem to thwart his opinions; but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation."

It is obviously unnecessary to have recourse to the suppo-

sition that it was only the canons of the Church of England that he refused to subscribe. It is altogether unsupposable that such a mind should have voluntarily subjected itself to such a yoke. It is sufficiently remarkable that Dr. Johnson should have seen nothing in the Articles which could thwart the maturer judgment of Milton. The 20th, to which we have already adverted, by its denial of the right of private judgment would be sufficient to vitiate the entire code in the view of such a mind as Milton's. It is equally surprising that Dr. Johnson should have forgotten the 37th, on the powers of civil magistrates, which not only asserts the ecclesiastical supremacy of the reigning monarch, but, in immediate connection with this, declares his right to punish "with the civil sword the stubborn and evil doers," thus sanctioning the infliction of pains and penalties for religious faith and practice; a principle which the lofty and generous nature of Milton held in utter detestation. As little justice is there in the remark which follows—that "the thought of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation." So far from this, he pays throughout his writings, as he did throughout his life, a devout reverence to the authority of law both human and Divine. But his was a dignified submission. He could discern the distinction between rational obedience and the prostration of the whole nature before a tyranny which strove to lord it alike over the body and the soul. Indeed, an unworthy and disingenuous spirit pervades this performance; and he who would maintain a high opinion of Dr. Johnson's integrity and candour, will do well to avoid his *Life of Milton*.

CHAPTER III.

MILTON'S RESIDENCE AT HORTON—COMPOSES THE COMUS—LYCIDAS—
ARCADES—L'ALLEGRO—IL PENNEROSO—DEATH OF HIS MOTHER—
AMBITIOUS ASPIRATIONS—VISITS ITALY AND IS RECEIVED WITH
GREAT DISTINCTION—HIS ADDRESS TO MANSO—REMARKS OF MR.
MACAULAY ON HIS LATIN VERSIFICATION.

ON leaving the university, in 1629, he spent five years, probably the happiest of his life, at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, whither his father had retired from business with a competent fortune. In his "Second Defence of the People of England," having been led, as before observed, by the slanders of his antagonist to a brief recapitulation of the events of his early life, he thus refers to this period of his history:—"Here (at Cambridge) I passed seven years in the usual course of instruction and study, with the approbation of the good, and without any stain upon my character, till I took the degree of Master of Arts. After this I did not, as this miscreant feigns, run away into Italy, but of my own accord retired to my father's house, whither I was accompanied by the regrets of most of the fellows of the college, who showed me no common marks of friendship and esteem. On my father's estate, where he had determined to pass the remainder of his days, I enjoyed an interval of uninterrupted leisure, which I entirely devoted to the perusal of the Greek and Latin classics; though I occasionally visited the metro-

polis, either for the sake of purchasing books, or of learning something new in mathematics or in music, in which I, at that time, found a source of pleasure and amusement. In this manner I spent five years, till my mother's death."

It is not at all surprising that Milton should have omitted from this narrative the fact that during this interval the most admired of his minor poems were composed. The *Comus*, which critics unite in designating as the most exquisite dramatic poem which perhaps the genius of man has ever produced, was composed in 1634, when its author was but twenty-five years of age. *Lycidas* was written in 1637; and there is every reason to believe that the *Arcades*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso* were also composed during Milton's residence at Horton.

The poem of *Comus* is too well known to require description, and certainly nothing need be added to the eulogies with which it has been loaded by the choicest minds of every succeeding generation. The plot of the masque of *Comus* is said to have been suggested by the circumstance of Lady Alice Egerton, the youthful daughter of the Earl of Bridgwater, having when travelling been accidentally separated from her companions in the night, and having wandered for some time in a forest by herself. It is not often that Dr. Johnson exposes himself to the shafts of ridicule. There is, indeed, *too much of him* to be the fit object of such light missiles; yet, what other treatment is merited by such an observation as the following in reference to a master-piece of genius, such as the *Comus*?—"It was presented at Ludlow, then the residence of the Lord President of Wales, in 1634, and *had the honour* of being acted by the Earl of Bridgwater's sons and daughters," all of whom the reader should be informed, by the way, were under fourteen years of age. That Johnson, in presence of the majesty of Milton, should exhibit this "falling-down-deadness of manner" before the little boys and girls of an earl, is certainly contemptible enough. Of the poem itself it is

impossible to speak in terms of too high admiration. The eulogy pronounced upon it by Dr. Symmons, is at once enthusiastic and discriminate: "Among the compositions of our own country," he says, "it certainly stands unrivalled for its affluence in poetic imagery and diction; and, as an effort of the creative power, it can be paralleled only by the muse of Shakspeare, by whom in this respect it is possibly exceeded. With Shakspeare the whole, excepting some rude outlines or suggestions of the story, is the immediate emanation of his own mind; but Milton's erudition precluded him from this extreme originality, and was perpetually supplying him with thoughts, which would sometimes obtain the preference from his judgment, and would sometimes be mistaken for his own property by his invention. Original, however, he is; and, of all the sons of song, inferior in this requisite of genius to Shakspeare alone."

In the only criticism of a particular passage upon which Dr. S. ventures, he is by no means so felicitous. He selects one of the most charming passages in the drama—that in which Comus describes the lady singing the echo song:—

How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled.

After justifying the preceding images he adds, "But it is surely a transgression, which stands in need of pardon, when proceeding a step further and accumulating personifications, we invest this raven-down with life and make it to smile." It is surprising that a man of the taste and perception of Dr. Symmons should have fallen into such an error. The application of the term to smile to the down of the imaginary bird, smoothed by the cadences of the music, involves no additional personification. Innumerable instances might be adduced from the highest ancient and modern poets, in which, without personification, and with a strict similarity of meaning, the surface of the sea is said to smile or to

frown under the sunshine or the passing shadows of clouds.

It is indeed a dangerous exercise to criticise this matchless production; it stands conspicuous among the brightest productions of human genius, by a refined and exquisite purity of sentiment which, even in a strictly imaginative range of thought, may be designated as intense spirituality; and the union of this ethereal spirit with the very genius of harmony completes the enchantment of the poem. The remote and heterogenous reading indicated by its allusions still further increases the wonder with which we peruse it. It has ever been matter of amazement that the *Comus* could have been produced by any one at the age of twenty-five; this, however, is not the only fact that proves the strange precocity of Milton's mind. It is scarcely more surprising that this drama should have been produced at that age than that one of the finest of his Latin poems should have been written at the age of nineteen. I refer to an Academic exercise composed to oblige one of the fellows of his college, and entitled *Naturam non pati senium*, its purpose being to reply to those who held the notion that the world was liable to the decays of old age. Several of Milton's biographers mention that this subject was probably suggested by a work published in the preceding year under the title of "An Apologie or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World, by George Hakewill, D.D., and Archdeacon of Surrey, 1627."*

Of the former production, Mr. Macaulay, in his brilliant article on Milton, first published in the *Edinburgh Review*, remarks, that "*Comus* is framed on the model of the Italian masque, as the *Samson* is formed on the model of the Greek tragedy. It is certainly the noblest performance of the kind which exists in any language."

* Similar views were maintained some years afterwards by Dr. South, a bitter enemy of Milton, in a Sermon from Eccl. vii. 10—"Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these?"

The Lycidas has been the subject of a contest so fierce as to leave it difficult to conceive that either party is altogether in the right. "In this poem," says Johnson, "there is no nature, for there is no truth: there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting: whatever images it can supply, are long ago exhausted; and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind." "Nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise invention, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, &c." Nay, he even goes so far as to say, "Surely no man could have fancied that he read Lycidas with pleasure, had he not known its author." Sir Egerton Brydges, on the contrary, maintains that "so far from deserving the character applied to it by Johnson, the language is throughout imaginative and picturesque, and the rhythm harmonious and enchanting. There is no poem in which the epithets are more beautiful, more appropriate, or more fresh; they are like the diction of no predecessor, but of some of the occasional passages of rural description by Shakspeare in his happiest moods. But it will be asked what invention there is in this poem? There is invention in the epithets, in the combinations, in the descriptions, in the apostrophes, in the visionary parts of the poem, in the sorrows, the predictions, and the consolations: in all those associations which none but a rich and poetical mind produces." Dr. Warton goes still further, and insists that the admiration or dislike of this poem is an infallible test whether a reader has or has not a poetical taste: that he who is not enraptured with it can have no genuine idea of poetry.

The truth probably lies in a medium between the splenetic prejudice of Johnson and the enthusiasm of his more partial biographers. That there is a rhapsodical wildness about the Lycidas, few will deny; and it must be further admitted that it is rendered less intelligible to many by the affluence of classical allusion with which it is perhaps overloaded. In-

deed the *embarras de richesses* was the necessary condition of such a mind as Milton's. With so vast a repository of knowledge, and with a faculty of association so importunately lively, his great difficulty must have been to insulate his thoughts from a throng of classical or extraneous associations, to discern an indorsement on many which otherwise he would mistake for his own, and to eliminate those references which, however familiar to his own mind, would be lost upon the multitude of his less privileged readers. In spite, however, of this splendid defect, it is difficult to imagine how Dr. Johnson could have read such passages as the following, and then attribute the admiration of Lycidas to the blinded partiality of the reader:—

Weep no more, woful shepherds, weep no more;
For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor :
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed :
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky :
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walk'd the waves;
Where other groves, and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song,
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,
That sing, and singing, in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.

It is remarkable that the *Comus* came out without a name, and that of *Lycidas*, which was written at the request of his college, as a monody upon one of its fellows, who was wrecked and drowned in the Irish Sea, the authorship was only indicated by the initials J. M.

Passing by the masque entitled *Arcades*, which is said to have been presented at Harefield, before Alice, Countess

Dowager of Derby, and acted by her own grandchildren, we next have to notice the poems entitled *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penneroso*, which are generally supposed to have been written about the same time; that is, during Milton's residence at Horton. The genial charm of these two poems appeared to have thawed for a moment the icy prejudice of Johnson himself. He pronounced them two noble efforts of imagination; and observes, with great discrimination, "The author's design is not what Theobald has remarked, merely to show how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed; but rather, how among the successive variety of appearances every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

"The cheerful man hears the lark in the morning; the pensive man hears the nightingale in the evening. The cheerful man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the woods; then walks '*not unseen*' to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milk-maid, and view the labours of the ploughman, and the mower; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty; and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues rural gaiety, through a day of labour, or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

"The pensive man at one time walks unseen, to muse at midnight; and at another, hears the sullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by glowing embers; or by a lonely lamp outwatches the north star, to discover the habitation of separate souls, and varies the shades of meditation by contemplating the magnificent or pathetic scenes of tragic and epic poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods, falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects

some dream of prognostication, or some music played by aerial performers."

All genuine poets unconsciously portray themselves; and it can scarcely be doubted, that in these exquisite delineations of temperament and feeling, Milton is representing the impressions which his own mind, in two actual but opposite phases, received from the external causes he depicts. They contain an unbroken succession of the most graceful images which nature and art can supply; and over the whole is shed a tone of delicacy and tenderness which invests the most ordinary scenes with the charm of romance. Any comparison of the beauties of these poems would be alike difficult and unsatisfactory. Probably *Il Penseroso* was the more natural emanation of the author's habitual sentiment, and, if he ever compared them, the object of his preference.*

On the 3rd of April, 1637, Milton was called to mourn the loss of his mother, who died at Horton, and was buried in the village church; and shortly after this event, he resolved on a plan of continental travel, with a special design to a sojourn in Italy and Greece. At a date intervening between his family affliction and his departure from England, (Sept. 23, 1637,) we find a letter addressed by him to his college friend, Deodati, which requires a passing reference, as containing the first disclosure which remains to us of the aspiration to an immortality of fame which Milton so early and so prophetically entertained. The letter is in Latin, and the passage referred to is to the following effect:—"But you are now anxious, as I know, to have your curiosity gratified. You solicitously inquire even about my thoughts. Attend, then, Deodati! but let me spare myself a blush by speaking in your ear; and for a moment, let me talk

* In Lord Teignmouth's *Life of Sir William Jones*, we find, in a letter from the latter, written on the spot, some very pleasing pages in which he endeavours, with much plausibility, to show that these poems must have been written at Horton, by pointing out, in the scenery of that neighbourhood, almost every natural image and object which the poet describes.

proudly to you. Do you ask me what is in my thought? So may God prosper me, as it is nothing less than immortality. But how shall I accomplish it? My wings are sprouting, and I meditate to fly; but while my Pegasus yet lifts himself on very tender pinions, let me be prudent and humble."

On the eve of his departure, he received a most flattering letter from Sir Henry Wootton, by means of which he was brought into association with Lord Scudamore, the English Ambassador at Paris; by whom he was, in that capital, introduced to the celebrated Grotius, and from whom he received letters of introduction, which proved of essential service to him in Italy. In the brief recapitulation of his own history, which he introduces perforce into his Second Defence of the People of England, and to which I have already referred, he thus cursorily sketches the events of this part of his history:—

"On my departure, the celebrated Henry Wootton, who had long been King James's Ambassador at Venice, gave me a signal proof of his regard, in an elegant letter which he wrote, breathing not only the warmest friendship, but containing some maxims of conduct which I found very useful in my travels. The noble Thomas Scudamore, King Charles's ambassador, to whom I carried letters of recommendation, received me most courteously at Paris. His lordship gave me a card of introduction to the learned Hugo Grotius, at that time Ambassador from the Queen of Sweden to the French court; whose acquaintance I anxiously desired, and to whose house I was accompanied by some of his lordship's friends. A few days after, when I set out for Italy, he gave me letters to the English merchants on my route, that they might show me any civilities in their power. Taking ship at Nice, I arrived at Genoa, and afterwards visited Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence. In the latter city, which I have always more particularly esteemed for the elegance of its dialect, its genius, and its taste, I stopped

about two months; when I contracted an intimacy with many persons of rank and learning, and was a constant attendant at their literary parties; a practice which prevails there, and tends so much to the diffusion of knowledge, and the preservation of friendship. No time will ever abolish the agreeable recollections which I cherish of Jacob Gaddi, Carlo Dati, Frescobaldi, Coltellino, Buonomattei, Clementillo, Francini, and many others. From Florence, I went to Siena, thence to Rome; where, after I had spent about two months in viewing the antiquities of that renowned city, where I experienced the most friendly attentions from Lucas Holstein, and other learned and ingenious men, I continued my route to Naples. There I was introduced by a certain recluse, with whom I had travelled from Rome, to John Battista Manso, Marquis of Villa, a nobleman of distinguished rank and authority, to whom Torquato Tasso, the illustrious poet, inscribed his book on friendship. During my stay, he gave me singular proofs of his regard: he himself conducted me round the city, and to the palace of the viceroy; and more than once paid me a visit at my lodgings. On my departure, he gravely apologised for not having shown me more civility, which he said he had been restrained from doing, because I had spoken with so little reserve on matters of religion. When I was preparing to pass over into Sicily and Greece, the melancholy intelligence which I received of the civil commotions in England made me alter my purpose; for I thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad, while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home. While I was on my way back to Rome, some merchants informed me that the English Jesuits had formed a plot against me if I returned to Rome, because I had spoken too freely on religion; for it was a rule which I laid down to myself in those places, never to be the first to begin any conversation on religion; but if any questions were put to me concerning my faith, to declare it without any reserve or fear. I, nevertheless, returned to Rome. I

took no steps to conceal either my person or my character; and for about the space of two months I again openly defended, as I had done before, the reformed religion, in the very metropolis of popery. By the favour of God, I got safe back to Florence, where I was received with as much affection as if I had returned to my native country. There I stopped as many months as I had done before, except that I made an excursion for a few days to Lucca; and, crossing the Apennines, passed through Bologna and Ferrara to Venice. After I had spent a month in surveying the curiosities of this city, and had put on board a ship the books which I had collected in Italy, I proceeded through Verona and Milan, and along the Leman lake to Geneva. At Geneva I held daily conferences with John Deodati, the learned Professor of Theology. Then, pursuing my former route through France, I returned to my native country, after an absence of one year, and about three months."

To this hurried narrative a few facts should be added, which Milton's modesty led him to conceal. Of the degree of admiration he excited in Italy, some idea may be formed from the poetic offerings he received from the most eminent Italians of the age. He was admitted into those literary societies which had arisen under the patronage of the Medici. In their assemblies, he informs us,* "it was the custom that every one should give some proof of his wit and reading." And many of the productions of his earlier years, and others which he composed at the time, were received "with written encomiums, which the Italian is not forward to bestow on men of this side the Alps." Among these panegyrists may be mentioned Carlo Dati and Antonio Francini, at Florence, who addressed to him, the one an Italian ode, and the other a Latin address, filled with enthusiastic prediction and praise. Selvaggi also, and Salsilli, at Rome, presented him with two complimentary epigrams.

* The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy. Works, vol. ii. p. 477.

The former anticipates the idea conveyed in Dryden's well-known epigram, by making him equal to Homer and Virgil. The latter describes the Thames as rendered more illustrious by Milton than all the streams which were consecrated by the muses of Homer, Virgil, and Tasso. A similar honour was paid him at Naples by Manso, the princely patron of Tasso. Both he and Salsilli were amply repaid for their courtesies; as both are best known to posterity by extended Latin poems which Milton afterwards addressed to them, in which his feelings towards them are described with his own classic elegance and beauty.

At Rome he received the most flattering consideration from Cardinal Barberini, the nephew of Urban VIII. Having invited Milton to a magnificent musical entertainment, the cardinal awaited his arrival at the door, and led him by the hand into the assembly. It is supposed to have been at this entertainment that he saw and heard the beautiful Leonora Baroni, with whose charms he was smitten, and whom he has celebrated in three of his choicest Latin epigrams.

It was amidst the combined inspirations of nature, art, society, and rising reputation, which concentrated on the glowing mind of Milton, during his residence in Italy, that he began to be conscious of his own vast powers, and to conceive, though indistinctly at first, the great project which was destined to make his fame co-extensive with the world, and coeval with the latest date of its history.

It is exceedingly interesting to trace, in Milton's own ingenuous language, the successive states of his mind, and the gradual strengthening of his aspirations, at this time. We have already listened to his first timid announcement of them, in a private letter to his friend Deodati. The next appears at the close of the Latin address to Manso, which we have already mentioned; and this, that it may be generally understood, must be presented in Sterling's translation, which does sad injustice to the original.

Oh ! might a friend, endow'd like you by Heaven,
To adorn the bard and judge the strain be given,
Whene'er my Muse shall sound the British strings,
And wake again to song her native kings :
Hail her great Arthur ! who, from mortals far,
Now pants for his return, and burns for war :
Record the hero-knights who sheathed the sword,
Link'd in strong union, round the mighty board,
And break (if daring genius fail not here)
The Saxon phalanx with the British spear.
Then when, not abjectly discharged, my trust
Of life was closed, and dust required its dust,
Oh ! might that friend, with dewy eye-lids near,
Catch my last sigh, and tell me I was dear :
Then my pale limbs, resolved in death's embrace,
Beneath an humble tomb devoutly place ;
And haply, too, arrest my fleeting form
In marble, from the sculptor's chisel warm
And full of soul ; while round my temples play
The Paphian myrtle, and Parnassian bay.
Meantime composed in consecrated rest,
I share the eternal Sabbath of the bless'd.
If faith deceive not,—if the mighty prize
Be fix'd for ardent virtue in the skies ;
There, where the wing of holy toil aspires,
Where the just mingle with celestial quires,
There, as my fates indulge, I may behold
These pious labours from my world of gold :
There while a purple glory veils my face,
Feel my mind swell to fit her heavenly place :
And, smiling at my life's successful fight,
Exult and brighten in ethereal light.

In terminating my notices of the Latin poetry of Milton with this his most admired effort, I pause in my narrative, to present the reader with Mr. Macaulay's admirable observations on this accomplishment, as possessed by the great bard.

“Versification,” he says, “in a dead language, is an exotic, a far-fetched, costly, sickly imitation of that which elsewhere may be found in healthful and spontaneous perfection. The soils on which this rarity flourishes are, in

general, as ill suited to the production of vigorous native poetry, as the flower-pots of a hothouse to the growth of oaks. That the author of the *Paradise Lost* should have written the epistle to Manso was truly wonderful. Never before were such marked originality and such exquisite mimicry found together. Indeed, in all the Latin poems of Milton, the artificial manner, indispensable to such works, is admirably preserved, while, at the same time, the richness of his fancy, and the elevation of his sentiments, give to them a peculiar charm, an air of nobleness and freedom, which distinguishes them from all other writings of the same class. They remind us of the amusements of those angelic warriors who composed the cohort of Gabriel,

‘About him exercised heroic games
The unarmed youth of heaven. But o’er their heads
Celestial armoury, shield, helm, and spear,
Hung bright with diamond flaming and with gold.’

We cannot look upon the sportive exercises for which the genius of Milton ungirds itself, without catching a glimpse of the gorgeous and terrible panoply which it is accustomed to wear. The strength of his imagination triumphed over every obstacle. So intense and ardent was the fire of his mind, that it not only was not suffocated beneath the weight of its fuel, but penetrated the whole superincumbent mass with its own heat and radiance.”

CHAPTER IV.

MILTON CONTEMPLATES THE PRODUCTION OF AN EPIC POEM—VISITS GALILEO—RETURNS TO ENGLAND—NOTICE OF DR. JOHNSON'S DISPARAGING REMARKS—MILTON'S JUSTIFICATION OF HIMSELF—PUBLISHES HIS TREATISE "OF REFORMATION IN ENGLAND"—ANALYSIS OF THE WORK—NOBLE INVOCATION AT THE CLOSE.

To explain some of the allusions to early British history which the epistle to Manso contains, and to manifest the further development of the great idea in Milton's bosom, it is necessary to anticipate chronology, and to have recourse to his own description of his state of mind at this time, as given in his "Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy," published in 1641. "I must say, therefore," he commences, "that after I had, for my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father (whom God recompense!) been exercised to the tongues, and some sciences, as my age would suffer, by sundry masters and teachers, both at home and at the schools, it was found that, whether aught was imposed by them that had the overlooking, or betaken to of mine own choice, in English, or other tongue, prosing, or versing, but chiefly by this latter, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live." Then, having referred to his Italian encomiasts, he adds, "I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by

labour and intense study, (which I take to be my portion in this life,) joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might, perhaps, leave something so written, to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die. These thoughts at once possessed me, and these other: that if I were certain to write as men buy leases, for three lives and downward, there ought no regard be sooner had than to God's glory, by the honour and instruction of my country. For which cause, and not only for that I knew it would be hard to arrive at the second rank among the Latins, I applied myself to that resolution, which Ariosto followed against the persuasions of Bembo, to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adorning of my native tongue; not to make verbal curiosities the end, (that were a toilsome vanity,) but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect. That what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old did for their country, I, in my proportion, with this over and above, of being a Christian, might do for mine; not caring to be once named abroad, though perhaps I could attain to that, but content with these British islands as my world; whose fortune hath hitherto been, that if the Athenians, as some say, made their small deeds great and renowned by their eloquent writers, England hath had her noble achievements made small by the unskilful handling of monks and mechanics.

“Time serves not now, and perhaps I might seem too profuse, to give any certain account of what the mind at home, in the spacious circuits of her musing, hath liberty to propose to herself, though of highest hope and hardest attempting; whether that epic form whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso, are a diffuse, and the book of Job a brief model; or whether the rules of Aristotle herein are strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed, which in them that know art, and use judg-

ment, is no transgression, but an enriching of art: and, lastly, what king or knight, before the Conquest, might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero. And as Tasso gave to a prince of Italy his choice, whether he would command him to write of Godfrey's expedition against the Infidels, or Belisarius against the Goths, or Charlemain against the Lombards; if to the instinct of nature, and the emboldening of art aught may be trusted, and that there be nothing adverse in our climate, or the fate of this age, it haply would be no rashness, from an equal diligence and inclination, to present the like offer in our own ancient stories; or whether those dramatic constitutions, wherein Sophocles and Euripides reign, shall be found more doctrinal and exemplary to a nation. The Scripture also affords us a divine pastoral drama in the Song of Solomon, consisting of two persons, and a double chorus, as Origen rightly judges. And the Apocalypse of St. John is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a seven-fold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies: and this my opinion, the grave authority of Pareus, commenting that book, is sufficient to confirm. Or if occasion shall lead, to imitate those magnific odes and hymns, wherein Pindarus and Callimachus are in most things worthy, some others in their frame judicious, in their matter most an end faulty. But those frequent songs throughout the law and prophets beyond all these, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition, may be easily made appear over all the kinds of lyric poesy to be incomparable. These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every nation, and are of power, beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the

throne and equipage of God's Almightyness, and what he works and what he suffers to be wrought with High Providence in his Church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ; to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and reflexes of man's thoughts from within; all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness to paint out and describe. * * * * Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader, that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapours of wine; like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amourist, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite; nor to be obtained by the invocation of dame Memory and her siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim, with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases: to this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs; till which, in some measure, be compassed at mine own peril and cost, I refuse not to sustain this expectation from as many as are not loth to hazard so much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them."

It was under the influence of these ambitious, and yet devout aspirations, that Milton prepared to quit the shores of Italy without prosecuting his travels to Greece, and to take his part in the great transactions on which the destiny of his country was suspended. Before he left, however, he visited, as he himself informs us, the illustrious Galileo, then in old

age and poverty, and spirit-broken by the merciless persecution of the Romish church. We have, unfortunately, no record of the particulars of this interview; but it is natural to suppose that a spectacle so impressively sad must have intensified Milton's sense of the miseries and mischiefs which result from arming any ecclesiastical body with the powers of the State.

On arriving in England he was informed of the premature death of his friend Deodati, and paid to his memory the "meed of a melodious tear," in a Latin monody written in the pastoral style. In this he again intimates his determination to perpetuate his name by the composition of an epic poem. At this time, however, he had not formed the grander conception which he ultimately developed. His thoughts were as yet turned solely to early British history;—he resolved that his poem should be of national interest; and declared that his hopes would be satisfied if his fame should be bounded by the British seas.

Milton's first fixed residence was in London, at a lodging which he hired in St. Bride's church-yard, where he received the two sons of his sister, Edward and John Philips, for the purpose of education. Dr. Johnson, who wrote his *Life of Milton* under a morbid anxiety to find something to disparage and to censure, and whose malignity increased with his disappointments, thus notices the event just recorded:—"Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance; on the man who hastens home, because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a school-master—which no wise man will consider in itself disgraceful." It is painful to contemplate, in such evidences as this, the littleness of Johnson's character in contrast with

the acknowledged greatness and vigour of his intellectual powers, the extent of his learning, the patience of his industry, and the unquestionable value of the works which resulted from this rare combination. The "great promises" to which Dr. Johnson refers, were all contained in the following simple statement:—"When I was preparing to pass over into Sicily and Greece, the melancholy intelligence which I received of the civil commotions in England made me alter my purpose; for I thought it base to be travelling for amusement abroad, when my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home." If the writer considered that these words committed Milton to the necessity of shouldering his musket and marching off to the scene of conflict, his foolish error might have been corrected by the language of Milton himself, in his 'Second Defence of the People of England,' which it is quite probable Johnson never read. "Relying on the assistance of God, they indeed repelled servitude with the most justifiable war; and though I claim no share of their peculiar praise, I can easily defend myself against the charge (if any charge of that nature should be brought against me) of timidity or of indolence. For I did not for any other reason decline the toils and dangers of war than that I might in another way, with much more efficacy, and with not less danger to myself, render assistance to my countrymen, and discover a mind neither shrinking from adverse fortune, nor actuated by any improper fear of calumny or of death. Since from my childhood, I had been devoted to the more liberal studies, and was always more powerful in my intellect than in my body, avoiding the labours of the camp, in which any robust common soldier might easily have surpassed me, I betook myself to those weapons which I could wield with the most effect, and I conceived that I was acting wisely when I thus brought my better and more valuable faculties, those which constituted my principal strength and consequence, to the assistance of my country and her most honourable cause."

Johnson, indeed, speaks of his veneration for Milton; though it must be evident to every one who is intimately acquainted with their characters, that the biographer was destitute both of the mental and moral qualities which alone could enable him to appreciate the noble character of the poet; and while he sneers at the school as a “wonder-working academy,” because it was Milton’s, he obligingly seeks to rescue that employment from contempt, because he himself happened to have been engaged in it.

The convulsion of the times, which was now approaching its crisis, withdrew the mind of Milton from its cherished object,—the pursuit of poetry and literature, and impelled him to the front ranks of that controversial fray which, in the then unexpected result, proved to be the all-important and decisive conflict. The contest between Charles and his people—the history and sequel of which will be memorable so long as the greatness of human nature shall rise against political and spiritual despotism, and so long as the infirmity of that nature shall allow of the pitiable sequence of reaction—was the battle not of powers, but of principles. And while Milton never doubted of the prowess or the success of the forces banded against the tyrant in the field, he felt that the opposition was directed against the palpable, material results of those principles, which were themselves but scantily understood. His sagacious mind foresaw that while the external machinery was removed, the motive power might remain; and that one engine of tyranny might be displaced, only to make room for another, which, veiled under an illusory name, might be mightier for mischief. Hence his great purpose was to avail himself of the position he held in advance of his age, in order to prepare his countrymen for the future, and to enable them, by a wise cognizance of the signs of the times, to evade the perils of the storm without splitting on the rocks that beset the harbour.

In this most critical position of public affairs, he has recorded, and thus enabled us to present, in his own lan-

guage, the facts and feelings by which his course was guided. "I returned to my native country,"* he says, "after an absence of one year and about three months, at the time when Charles, having broken the peace, was renewing what is called the episcopal war with the Scots, in which the royalists, being routed in the first encounter, and the English being universally and justly disaffected, the necessity of his affairs at last obliged him to convene a parliament. As soon as I was able, I hired a spacious house in the city for myself and my books; where I again, with rapture, renewed my literary pursuits, and where I awaited the issue of the contest, which I trusted to the wise conduct of Providence, and to the courage of the people. The vigour of the parliament had begun to humble the pride of the bishops. As long as the liberty of speech was no longer subject to control, all mouths began to be opened against the bishops; some complained of the vices of the individuals, others of those of the order. They said that it was unjust that they alone should differ from the model of other reformed churches; that the government of the church should be according to the pattern of other churches, and particularly the Word of God. This awakened all my attention and my zeal. I saw that a way was opening for the establishment of real liberty; that the foundation was laying for the deliverance of man from the yoke of slavery and superstition; that the principles of religion, which were the first objects of our care, would exert a salutary influence on the manners and constitution of the republic; and as I had, from my youth, studied the distinctions between religious and civil rights, I perceived that if I ever wished to be of use, I ought at least not to be wanting to my country, to the church, and to so many of my fellow-Christians, in a crisis of so much danger; I therefore determined to relinquish the other pursuits in which I was engaged, and to transfer the whole force of my

* 'The Second Defence of the People of England.' Prose Works, vol. i. p. 257.

talents and my industry to this one important object. I accordingly wrote two books to a friend, concerning the reformation of the Church of England."

That the prosecution of this purpose was distasteful to him, and only undertaken under an imperious sense of duty, we learn from his own acknowledgment; for he laments that he was forced "to interrupt the pursuit of his hopes, and to leave a calm and pleasing solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark on a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes, from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies." And, again: "For surely to every good and peaceable man, it must, in nature, needs be a hateful thing to be the displeaser and molester of thousands; much better would it like him, doubtless, to be the messenger of gladness and contentment, which is his chief intended business to all mankind, but that they resist and oppose their own true happiness. But when God commands to take the trumpet, and blow a dolorous or a jarring blast, it lies not in man's will what he shall say, or what he shall conceal. If he shall think to be silent, as Jeremiah did, because of the reproach and the derision he met with daily, 'and all his familiar friends watched for his halting,' to be revenged on him for speaking the truth, he would be forced to confess as he confessed: 'His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones: I was weary with forbearing, and could not stay.' * * * * Lastly, I should not choose this manner of writing, wherein, knowing myself inferior to myself—led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account, but of my left hand."*

In describing the train of reasoning pursued in the two books "Of Reformation in England, and the Causes that

* 'The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy.' Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 474, 477.

hitherto have hindered it," I shall adopt, with but little alteration, the brief but complete analysis of Toland. In the first, he points out what were, during and subsequent to the reign of Henry VIII., the real impediments to a perfect reformation in this kingdom. These he reduces under two principal heads—the retention of popish ceremonies, and the confiding to diocesan bishops illegitimate powers from which the people were excluded. "Our ceremonies," he says, "are senseless in themselves, and serve for nothing but either to facilitate our return to popery, or to hide the defects of better knowledge, or to set off the pomp of prelacy." With regard to the bishops, he affirms that, "at the beginning, though they had removed the pope, they hugged the popedom, and shared the authority among themselves." That, in King Edward VI.'s time, "they were, with their prostitute gravities, the common stoles to countenance every politic fetch that was then on foot. If a toleration for mass was to be begged of the king for his sister Mary, lest Charles V. should be angry, who but the grave prelates, Cranmer and Ridley, should be sent to extort it from the young king? But out of the mouth of that godly and royal child, Christ himself returned such an awful repulse to these halting and time-serving prelates, that, after much bold importunity, they went their way, not without shame and tears. When the Lord Sudley, Admiral of England, was wrongfully to lose his life, no man could be found fitter than Latimer to divulge, in his sermon, the forged accusations laid to his charge, to defame him with the people. Cranmer, one of the king's executors, and the other bishops did, to gratify the ambition of a traitor, consent to exclude from the succession, not only Mary the papist, but also Elizabeth the protestant, though before declared by themselves the lawful issue of their late master." In Queen Elizabeth's reign, he imputes the obstruction of a further reformation still to the bishops; and then proceeds to prove, from antiquity, that all ecclesiastical elections belonged to

the people ; but that if those ages had favoured episcopacy, we should not be much concerned, since the best times were extensively infected with error, the best men of those times foully tainted, and the best writings of those men dangerously adulterated. These propositions he labours to prove at large, and thus concludes : “ But I trust they for whom God hath reserved the honour of reforming this church, will easily perceive their adversary’s drift in thus calling for antiquity. They fear the plain field of the Scriptures ; the chase is too hot ; they seek the dark, the bushy, the tangled forest ; they would imbosk ; they feel themselves struck in the transparent streams of Divine truth ; they would plunge and tumble, and think to lie hid in the foul weeds and muddy waters where no plummet can reach the bottom. But let them beat themselves like whales, and spend their oil till they be dragged ashore : though wherefore should ministers give them so much line for shifts and delays ? Wherefore should they not urge only the Gospel, and hold it ever in their faces, like a mirror of diamond, till it dazzle and pierce their misty eyeballs,—maintaining the honour of its absolute sufficiency and supremacy inviolable ? ”

In the second book, he continues his discourses of prelatical episcopacy, and displays the political aspect of the system, which he shows to be always opposed to liberty. He deduces its history from its remotest origin, and proves that, “ in England particularly, it is so far from being, as commonly alleged, the only form of church discipline agreeable to monarchy, that the mortallest diseases and convulsions of the government did ever proceed from the craft of the prelates, or were occasioned by their pride.”

Having thus indicated the general scope of this treatise, I shall endeavour to bring the reader better acquainted with it, by selecting a few passages which best convey an impression of Milton’s controversial powers and style, which most clearly develop his ecclesiastical principles, and which are best calculated to attach to the prose writings of Milton a

greater amount of attention than they have ever as yet received.

He naturally commences with the first grand defection from the simplicity of the Christian religion—the papal apostacy; and after lamenting its fraud of “deceivable traditions, its beggary of old cast rudiments, and its sensual idolatry,” he adds, “Attributing purity or impurity to things indifferent, that they might bring the inward acts of the spirit to the outward and customary eye-service of the body, as if they could make God earthly and fleshly, because they could not make themselves heavenly and spiritual; they began to draw down all the Divine intercourse betwixt God and the soul, yea, the very shape of God himself, into an exterior and bodily form, urgently pretending a necessity and obligation of joining the body in a formal reverence and worship circumscribed; they hallowed it, they fumed it, they sprinkled it, they bedecked it, not in robes of pure innocency, but of pure linen, with other deformed and fantastic dresses, in palls and mitres, gold, and gewgaws fetched from Aaron’s old wardrobe, or the flamen’s vestry: then was the priest set to con his motions and his postures, his liturgies and his luries, till the soul, by this means of overbodying herself, given up justly to fleshly delights, bated her wing apace downward: and finding the ease she had from her visible and sensuous colleague, the body, in performance of religious duties, her pinions now broken, and flagging, shifted off from herself the labour of high soaring any more, forgot her heavenly flight, and left the dull and droiling carcase to plod on in the old road, and drudging trade of outward conformity.”

From these general considerations, Milton descends to the two great particulars and the erroneous views which have most distracted the church ever since his day, viz., the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and the relation which its pretended priesthood sustains towards them. This point he dismisses with brevity, but in terms pregnant

with instruction to the present generation. "Then was baptism changed into a kind of exorcism, and water, sanctified by Christ's institute, thought little enough to wash off the original spot, without the scratch or cross impression of a priest's forefinger: and that feast of free grace and adoption to which Christ invited his disciples to sit as brethren, and co-heirs of the happy covenant, which at that table was to be sealed to them, even that feast of love and heavenly-admitted fellowship, the seal of filial grace, became the subject of horror, and glouting adoration, pageanted about like a dreadful idol; which sometimes deceives well-meaning men, and beguiles them of their reward, by their voluntary humility: which, indeed, is fleshly pride, preferring a foolish sacrifice, and the rudiments of the world, as St. Paul to the Colossians explaineth, before a savoury obedience to Christ's example."

From the shadow of these mournful considerations Milton emerges with an evident sense of elation and relief to celebrate the glorious, though partial, revival of religious truth which had been witnessed by the age immediately preceding his own. "But to dwell no longer in characterizing the depravities of the church, and how they sprung and how they took increase; when I recall to mind at last, after so many dark ages, wherein the huge overshadowing train of error had almost swept all the stars out of the firmament of the church; how the bright and blissful Reformation (by divine power) struck through the black and settled night of ignorance and anti-christian tyranny, methinks a sovereign and reviving joy must needs rush into the bosom of him, that reads or hears; and the sweet odour of the returning gospel imbathe his soul with the fragrancy of heaven. Then was the sacred Bible sought out of the dusty corners where profane falsehood and neglect had thrown it, the schools opened, divine and human learning raked out of the embers of forgotten tongues, the princes and cities trooping apace to the new-erected banner of salvation; the martyrs, with the

irresistible might of weakness, shaking the powers of darkness, and scorning the fiery rage of the old red dragon."

From hence he descends, as has been seen from the foregoing analysis, to the grand obstacles of the Reformation; and after noticing the conduct of Henry VIII. as a mere struggle for an unhallowed supremacy, and the political obstructions which impeded the great work in the reign of Edward VI., he continues, with reference to the bishops of that age:—"It was not episcopacy that wrought in them the heavenly fortitude of martyrdom, as little is it that martyrdom can make good episcopacy; but it was episcopacy that led the good and holy men, through the temptation of the enemy, and the snare of this present world, to many blameworthy and opprobrious actions. And it is still episcopacy that before all our eyes worsens and slugs the most learned and seeming religious of our ministers, who no sooner advanced to it, but, like a seething pot set to cool, sensibly exhale and reek out the greatest part of that zeal and those gifts which were formerly in them, settling in a skinny congealment of ease and sloth at the top: and if they keep their learning by some potent sway of nature, it is a rare chance; but their devotion most commonly comes to that queazy temper of lukewarmness, that gives a vomit to God himself.

"But why do we suffer mis-shapen and enormous prelatism as we do, thus to blanch and varnish her deformities with the fair colours, as before of martyrdom, so now of episcopacy? They are not bishops, God and all good men know they are not, that have filled this land with late confusion and violence; but a tyrannical crew and corporation of impostors, that have blinded and abused the world so long under that name. He that, enabled with gifts from God, and the lawful and primitive choice of the church assembled, in convenient number, faithfully from that time forward feeds his parochial flock, has his co-equal and compresbyterial power to ordain ministers and deacons by public prayer and vote of Christ's congregation, in like sort as he

himself was ordained, and is a true apostolic bishop. But when he steps up into the chair of pontifical pride, and changes a moderate and exemplary house for a misgoverned and haughty palace, spiritual dignity for carnal precedence, and secular high office and employment for the high negotiations of his heavenly embassy, then he degrades, then he unbishops himself; he that makes him bishop, makes him no bishop.”

Milton next comments on a subject to which recent events have given a special interest,—the revision of the liturgy, a task committed to a number of moderate Divines, properly so called, as he intimates, being “neither hot nor cold,” the result of which, under such a queen (Elizabeth) and at such a time, was naturally but the reproduction of “the sour crudities of yesterday’s popery.” The *locus pœnitentiæ* thus afforded to those of the clergy who were still imbued with the spirit of popery, while for obvious reasons they refused allegiance to its power, did not escape the simple-minded sagacity of Milton. It is remarkable, however, that this capital defect in the constitution of the Anglican church, has to a great extent been smothered and concealed by its members, until these latter days when the increased strength of non-conformity on the one hand, and the leavening influence of religion on a portion of the clergy, has excited an opposition which has openly revealed it. After proving from ancient church history the rightful authority of the christian laity in the appointment of their bishops or pastors, and pointing out the mischiefs occasioned in the first instance by the acts of Constantine in linking the Christian church with the State, and by the spirit of Constantine, in so far as it has influenced every succeeding generation, he thus mournfully applies his remarks to the persecutions which in his own day rankly germinated from this root of bitterness.

“O, Sir, if we could but see the shape of our dear mother England as poets are wont to give a personal form to what they please, how would she appear, think ye, but in a

mourning weed, with ashes upon her head, and tears abundantly flowing from her eyes, to behold so many of her children exposed at once, and thrust from things of dearest necessity, because their conscience could not assent to things which the bishops thought indifferent? What more binding than conscience? What more free than indifferency? Cruel, then, must that indifferency needs be that shall violate the strict necessity of conscience; merciless and inhuman that free choice and liberty that shall break asunder the bonds of religion! Let the astrologer be dismayed at the portentous blaze of comets, and impressions in the air, as foretelling troubles and changes to states: I shall believe there cannot be a more ill-boding sign to a nation (God turn the omen from us!) than when the inhabitants, to avoid insufferable grievances at home, are enforced by heaps to forsake their native country."

He next proceeds to show the evils of a purely political kind resulting to any country from the rival power—the *imperium in imperio*—of a privileged hierarchy. He demonstrates that it is incompatible with a well-regulated monarchical constitution—that it soils and degrades the sanctity of ecclesiastical discipline—that it drains the national wealth, not for the purposes of secular education and religious teaching, but for aggrandizing the plethoric state of prelates and dignitaries; while it leaves the working clergy in penury and neglect, distributing, to use his own words, "a moderate maintenance to every painful minister, that now scarce sustains his family with bread, while the prelates revel like Belshazzar, with their full carouses in goblets, and vessels of gold snatched from God's temple." In this respect it may be observed, in passing, the Anglican, like the Roman, church, may boast its immutability. In our own day, we have heard a similar complaint from a dignitary of the church, as unlike to Milton in his motives, sentiments, and style, as he was in his official position. The late Rev. Sydney Smith, in his well-known letter to Archdeacon

Singleton, exclaims—“ Why is the Church of England to be only an assemblage of beggars and bishops? The Right Reverend Dives in the palace, and Lazarus in orders at his gate, doctored by dogs, and comforted with crumbs.”

For the remedy of these multiplied evils, he looks to the Reformation commenced in England, and more happily prosecuted in Scotland; and after indignantly referring to the Royal policy to embroil them in “ a war fit for Cain to be the leader of—an abhorred, a cursed, a fraternal war”—he breaks out into the following animated apostrophe:—

“ Go on both hand in hand, O nations! never to be dis-united; be the praise and the heroic song of all posterity; merit this, but seek only virtue, not to extend your limits; (for what needs to win a fading triumphant laurel out of the tears of wretched men?) but to settle the pure worship of God in his church, and justice in the state: then shall the hardest difficulties smooth out themselves before ye; envy shall sink to hell, craft and malice be confounded, whether it be homebred mischief or outlandish cunning; yea, other nations will then covet to serve ye, for lordship and victory are but the pages of justice and virtue. Commit securely to true wisdom the vanquishing and uncasing of craft and subtlety, which are but her two runagates: join your invincible might to do worthy and godlike deeds; and then he that seeks to break your union, a cleaving curse be his inheritance to all generations!”

Milton next commends the representative element in the British constitution, which he compares to the apostolic mode of election in the church, and derives from it an argument in favour of the appointment of all spiritual functionaries by the collective suffrage of the members of churches, and the total dissociation of every religious body from all secular authority, whether legislative or executive. He shows that no objections against running into extremes should withhold the Parliament from making this separation absolute and complete; urging that this avoidance of ex-

tremes is only justifiable in matters which are morally indifferent; but that in such a case as this, involving the most sound considerations, "we ought to hie us from evil like a torrent, and rid ourselves of corrupt discipline, as we would shake fire out of our bosoms." He traces the multiplied evils which prelacy had produced in England for nearly twelve hundred years, and shows that in proportion to the political power possessed by the priesthood, have ever been the corruption and decay of religion, the demoralization of the age, and the perpetration of every species of cruelty. After a majestic description of the terrors of legitimate spiritual discipline, he thus contrasts them with the coarse and unauthorized powers clamoured for by the sordid selfishness of the bishops:—

"Sir, would you know what the remonstrance of these men would have, what their petition implies? They entreat us that we would not be weary of those insupportable grievances that our shoulders have hitherto cracked under; they beseech us that we would think them fit to be our justices of peace, our lords, our highest officers of state, though they come furnished with no more experience than they learnt between the cook and the manciple, or more profoundly at the college audit, or the regent house, or, to come to their deepest insight, at their patron's table; they would request us to endure still the rustling of their silken cassocks, and that we would burst our midriffs, rather than laugh to see them under sail in all their lawn and sarcenet, their shrouds and tackle, with a geometrical rhomboides upon their heads; they would bear us in hand that we must of duty still appear before them once a year in Jerusalem, like good circumcised males and females, to be taxed by the poll, to be sconced our head-money, our twopences, in their chanderly shop-book of Easter. They pray us that it would please us to let them still hale us, and worry us with their ban dogs and pursuivants; and that it would please the parliament that they may yet have the whipping, fleecing, and flaying of us in

their diabolical courts, to tear the flesh from our bones, and into our wide wounds, instead of balm, to pour in the oil of tartar, vitriol, and mercury; surely, a right-reasonable, innocent, and soft-hearted petition! O the relenting bowels of the fathers! Can this be granted them, unless God have smitten us with frenzy from above, and with a dazzling giddiness at noonday?”

It is a grand peculiarity of Milton's mind that in its most intense excitement it rises to an elevation from which material and temporal things are invisible; and only regains its calmness after a rapt sojourn among the grandeurs that are “unseen and eternal.” When contemplating from the distance of years the composition of an epic poem which should immortalize his name and illustrate the literature of his country, he placed its scene amidst the romantic traditions of ancient Britain. But when the inspiration came, monarchs, Druids, and bards were forgotten together; and, obeying a higher vocation, “he passed the flaming bounds of space and time.” It is under a similar influence that, with his imagination kindled and expanded, as he gained ampler views of the glorious possibilities of a state of perfect religious freedom, he closes with the following sublime and perhaps unrivalled invocation:—

“Thou, therefore, that sittest in light and glory unapproachable, Parent of angels and men! next, thee I implore, Omnipotent King, Redeemer of that lost remnant whose nature thou didst assume—ineffable and everlasting love! and thou, the third subsistence of Divine infinitude, illuming Spirit, the joy and solace of created things!—one Impersonal Godhead! look upon this thy poor and almost spent and expiring church: leave her not thus a prey to those importunate wolves that wait and think long till they devour thy tender flock; these wild boars that have broke into thy vineyard, and left the print of their polluting hoofs on the souls of thy servants. O let them not bring about their damned designs that stand now at the entrance of the bottomless pit,

expecting the watchword to open and let out those dreadful locusts and scorpions, to re-involve us in that pitchy cloud of infernal darkness, where we shall never more see the sun of thy truth again, never hope for the cheerful dawn, never more hear the bird of morning sing! Be moved with pity at the afflicted state of this our shaken monarchy, that now lies labouring under her throes, and struggling against the grudges of more dreaded calamities.

“O Thou, that, after the impetuous rage of five bloody inundations, and the succeeding sword of intestine war, soaking the land in her own gore, didst pity the sad and ceaseless revolution of our swift and thick-coming sorrows: when we were quite breathless, of thy free grace didst motion peace and terms of covenant with us; and having first well nigh freed us from antichristian thralldom, didst build up this Britannie empire to a glorious and enviable height, with all her daughter islands about her: stay us in this felicity; let not the obstinacy of our half obedience and will-worship bring forth that viper of sedition, that for these fourscore years hath been breeding to eat through the entrails of our peace; but let her cast her abortive spawn without the danger of this travailing and throbbing kingdom; that we may still remember, in our solemn thanksgiving, how for us the northern ocean, even to the frozen Thule, was scattered with the proud shipwrecks of the Spanish Armada; and the very maw of hell ransacked, and made to give up her concealed destruction, ere she could vent it in that horrible and damned blast.

“O how much more glorious will those former deliverances appear, when we shall know them not only to have saved us from greatest miseries past, but to have reserved us for greatest happiness to come! Hitherto thou hast but freed us, and that not fully, from the unjust and tyrannous claim of thy foes; now unite us entirely, and appropriate us to thyself; tie us everlastingly in willing homage to the prerogative of thy eternal throne.

"And now we know, O Thou our most certain hope and defence, that thy enemies have been consulting all the sorceries of the great whore, and have formed their plots with that sad intelligencing tyrant that mischiefs the world with his mines of Ophir, and lies thirsting to revenge his naval ruins that have larded our seas; but let them all take counsel together, and let it come to nought; let them decree, and do Thou cancel it; let them gather themselves, and be scattered; let them embattle themselves, and be broken; let them embattle, and be broken, for Thou art with us.

"Then, amidst the hymns and hallelujahs of saints, some one may perhaps be heard offering at high strains in new and lofty measure to sing and celebrate thy divine mercies and marvellous judgments in this land throughout all ages; whereby this great and warlike nation, instructed and inured to the fervent and continual practice of truth and righteousness, and casting far from her the rags of her whole vices, may press onward to that high and happy emulation to be found the soberest, wisest, and most Christian people at that day when Thou, the eternal and shortly-expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world; and, distributing national honours and rewards to religious and just commonwealths, shalt put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming thy universal and mild monarchy through heaven and earth; where they, undoubtedly, that, by their labours, counsels, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion and their country, shall receive, above the inferior orders of the blessed, the regal addition of principalities, legions, and thrones, into their glorious titles, and in supremacy of beatific vision progressing the deathless and irrevoluble circle of eternity, shall clasp inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in overmeasure for ever.

"But they, contrary, that, by the impairing and diminution of the true faith, the distresses and servitude of their country, aspire to high dignity, rule, and promotion here, after a shameful end in this life (which God grant them), shall be

thrown down eternally into the darkest and deepest gulf of hell, where, under the despiteful control, the trample, and spurn of all the other damned, that, in the anguish of their torture, shall have no other ease than to exercise a raving and bestial tyranny over them as their slaves and negroes, they shall remain in that plight for ever, the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, most underfoot, and down-trodden vassals of perdition!"

CHAPTER V.

MILTON PUBLISHES HIS TREATISES "ON PRELITICAL EPISCOPACY,"
AND "THE REASON OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT URGED AGAINST PRE-
LACY," IN ANSWER TO BISHOP HALL AND ARCHBISHOP USHER—
CRITICISM ON THEIR STYLE—ANALYSIS OF BOTH TREATISES.

WHILE the two Books on Reformation in England were hailed by that increasing portion of the British community to whom the Anglican church had become execrable through the frantic ferocity of Laud, and the transfusion of his spirit through the clergy at large, they stimulated some of the wiser and better adherents of that church to the only kind of opposition which had even a remote chance of success. The first result was the production of a treatise entitled "An Humble Remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament," from the pen of Bishop Hall: and the publication about the same time of Archbishop Usher's work, "The Apostolical Institution of Episcopacy." These works drew from Milton prompt replies; one being entitled, "Of Prelatical Episcopacy," and the other, "The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy." As literary productions, these tracts are thus characterised by Dr. Symmons: "Like his former controversial productions, they are distinguished by force, acuteness, and erudition; but their language, though bearing a greater appearance of artifice and labour, is still evidently that of a man more conversant with

the authors of Greece and Rome, than with those of his own country, and seems to be formed without sufficient attention to the genius of his native tongue. This observation will apply, with very diminished force, to some of his succeeding compositions: but in all of them there is an occasional recurrence of foreign idioms and of a classic inversion of phrase, not properly admissible in a language in which prepositions supply the place and office of inflexions."

It cannot be denied that there is much justice in this observation; and it is probable that the very partial and select popularity which Milton's prose writings have enjoyed, is mainly traceable to this feature in his style. Still it must neither be attributed to affectation, nor to a defect of nicety of perception and taste. It must be recollected that the Latin language and literature were as familiar to Milton as his own; that through life he adopted that language in much of his private and all his public correspondence, as well as in the composition of those of his works for which he desired a European notoriety; and that the natural consequence of this was an unconscious appropriation of its forms similar to that which every one who has sojourned long in a foreign country must have observed in himself. Upon the argument of this controversy, Dr. Symmons's remarks are not quite so correct: "The point at issue between these polemics was the divine or the human origin of episcopacy, as a peculiar order in the church, distinct in kind and pre-eminent in degree. That an officer with the title of *Episcopus*, or Overseer, (corrupted first by our ancestors into bigcop, and afterwards softened into bishop,) had existed in the church from its first construction by the apostles, was a fact which could not be denied: but while this officer was asserted by one party to have been nothing more than the president of the elders, he was affirmed by the other to have been elevated above these elders or presbyters by essential privileges, by a separate as well as by a superior jurisdiction."

A perusal of the opening passage of the treatise on Prelatical Episcopacy, will show where the Doctor's misconception lies. "Episcopacy," says Milton,* "as it is taken for an order in the church above a presbyter, or, as we commonly name him, the minister of a congregation, is either of divine constitution or of human. If only of human, we have the same human privilege that all men have ever had since Adam, being born free, and in the mistress island of all the British, to retain this episcopacy, or to remove it, consulting with our own occasions and conveniences, and for the prevention of our own dangers and disquiets, in what best manner we can devise, without running at a loss, as we must needs in those stale and useless records of either uncertain or unsound antiquity; which, if we hold fast to the grounds of the reformed church, can neither skill of us, nor we of it, so oft as it would lead us to the broken reed of tradition. If it be of Divine constitution, to satisfy us fully in that, the Scripture only is able, it being the only book left us of Divine authority, not in anything more Divine than in the all-sufficiency it hath to furnish us, as with all other spiritual knowledge, so with this in particular—setting out to us a perfect man of God, accomplished to all the good works of his charge: through all which book can be nowhere, either by plain text or solid reasoning, found any difference between a bishop and a presbyter, save that they be two names to signify the same order."

The Treatise, "Of Prelatical Episcopacy," is throughout a close tissue of argumentation, but little relieved by those sudden gleams and fervid flashes of eloquence which throw lustre over his other productions. In his reasoning, he closely follows the track of his opponents, exposing the fallacious traditions by which prelacy is supported, through "the indigested heap and fry of authors which they call antiquity." He clearly shows, first, the small amount of credit to be attached to those writers to whom his antagonists were accus-

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 421.

tomed to appeal. "I will not stand to argue," he says, "as yet with fair allowance I might, that we may as justly suspect there were some bad and slippery men in that council, as we know there are wont to be in our convocations; nor shall I need to plead at this time, that nothing hath been more attempted, nor with more subtlety brought about, both anciently by other heretics, and modernly by papists, than to falsify the editions of the councils, of which we have none but from our adversaries' hands, whence canons, acts, and whole spurious councils are thrust upon us; and hard it would be to prove in all, which are legitimate, against the lawful rejection of an urgent and free disputer. But this I purpose not to take advantage of; for what avails it to wrangle about the corrupt editions of councils, whenas we know that many years ere this time, which was almost five hundred years after Christ, the councils themselves were foully corrupted with ungodly prelatism, and so far plunged into worldly ambition as that it stood them upon long ere this to uphold their now well-tested hierarchy by what fair pretext soever they could, in like manner as they had now learned to defend many other gross corruptions by as ancient and supposed authentic tradition as episcopacy? And what hope can we have of this whole council to warrant us a matter, four hundred years at least above their time, concerning the distinction of bishop and presbyter, whenas we find them such blind judges of things before their eyes, in their decrees of precedency between bishop and bishop, acknowledging Rome for the apostolic throne, and Peter, in that see, for the rock, the basis, and the foundation of the Catholic church and faith, contrary to the interpretation of more ancient fathers?" *

He next shows, by successive references to Ignatius, Polycarp, Polycrates, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, that their testimonies were inconsistent with each other, and utterly insufficient to establish the facts for which

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 423.

they are adduced. After demolishing the authority of Ignatius, he dismisses him with the following passage :—“ Had God ever intended that we should have sought any part of useful instruction from Ignatius, doubtless he would not have so ill-provided for our knowledge, as to send him to our hands in this broken and disjointed plight; and if he intended no such thing, we do injuriously in thinking to taste better the pure evangelic manna, by seasoning our mouths with the tainted scraps and fragments of an unknown table; and searching among the verminous and polluted rags dropped overworn from the toiling shoulders of time, with these deformedly to quilt and interlace the entire, the spotless, and undecaying robe of truth, the daughter, not of time, but of Heaven, only bred up here below in Christian hearts, between two grave and holy nurses, the doctrine and discipline of the gospel.”*

In estimating the value of Tertullian’s evidence, he says : “ We grant them bishops, we grant them worthy men, we grant them placed in several churches by the apostle; we grant that Irenæus and Tertullian affirm this; but that they were placed in a superior order above the presbytery, show from all these words why we should grant. It is not enough to say the apostle left this man bishop in Rome, and that other in Ephesus; but to show when they altered their own decree set down by St. Paul, and made all the presbyters underlings to one bishop. But suppose Tertullian had made an imparity where none was originally, should he move us, that goes about to prove an imparity between God the Father and God the Son, as these words import in his book against Praxeas?—‘ The Father is the whole substance, but the Son a derivation, and portion of the whole, as he himself professes, “ Because the Father is greater than me.” ’ Believe him now for a faithful relater of tradition, whom you see such an unfaithful expounder of the Scripture. Besides, in his time, all allowable tradition was now lost. For

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 428.

this same author, whom you bring to testify the ordination of Clement to the bishopric of Rome by Peter, testifies also, in the beginning of his treatise concerning chastity, that the Bishop of Rome did then use to send forth his edicts by the name of Pontifex Maximus, and Episcopus Episcoporum, Chief Priest, and Bishop of Bishops: for shame then do not urge that authority to keep up a bishop, that will necessarily engage you to set up a pope.”*

The treatise concludes with the following animated rebuke of those who would “set up their ephod and teraphim of antiquity against the brightness and perfection of the gospel:”—“Lastly, I do not know, it being undeniable that there are but two ecclesiastical orders (bishops and deacons) mentioned in the gospel, how it can be less than impiety to make a demur at that which is there so perspicuous, confronting and paralleling the sacred verity of St. Paul with the offals and sweepings of antiquity. Christ has pronounced that no tittle of his word shall fall to the ground: and if one jot be alterable, it is as possible that all should perish; and this shall be our righteousness, our ample warrant, and strong assurance, both now and at the last day, never to be ashamed of, against all the heaped names of angels and martyrs, councils and fathers, urged upon us, if we have given ourselves up to be taught by the pure and living precept of God’s word only; which, without more additions, nay, with a forbidding of them, hath within itself the promise of eternal life, the end of all our wearisome labours and all our sustaining hopes.”†

“The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy” is a more extended treatise, and far more richly characterised by the genius of Milton than that on “Prelatical Episcopacy.” It commences with some general considerations on church government, among which we find the following

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 422, 423.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 437.

noble passage on discipline:* “And certainly discipline is not only the removal of disorder; but if any visible shape can be given to divine things, the very visible shape and image of virtue, whereby she is not only seen in the regular gestures and motions of her heavenly paces as she walks, but also makes the harmony of her voice audible to mortal ears. Yea, the angels themselves, in whom no disorder is feared, as the apostle that saw them in his rapture describes, are distinguished and quaternioned into their celestial principdoms and satrapies, according as God himself has writ his imperial decrees through the great provinces of heaven. The state also of the blessed in paradise, though never so perfect, is not therefore left without discipline, whose golden surveying reed marks out and measures every quarter and circuit of New Jerusalem. Yet is it not to be conceived, that those eternal effluences of sanctity and love in the glorified saints should by this means be confined and cloyed with repetition of that which is prescribed, but that our happiness may orb itself into a thousand vagancies of glory and delight, and with a kind of eccentricalequation, be, as it were, an invariable planet of joy and felicity; how much less can we believe that God would leave his frail and feeble, though not less beloved, church here below, to the perpetual stumble of conjecture and disturbance in this our dark voyage, without the card and compass of discipline?”†

And here, it may be allowable to notice, in passing, an objection brought against our author by one of his greatest admirers, and certainly the most acute and judicious editor

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 442.

† This language will remind the reader of Hooker’s much-admired passage on law, which for the sake of comparison I shall subjoin without comment:—“The seat of law is the bosom of God; her voice the harmony of the world: all things in heaven and earth do her homage; the very least as feeling her care, the greatest as not exempt from her power:—both angels and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.”—*Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I. *ad finem*.

of his prose writings, Mr. St. John. "It is surprising," he says, "Milton should have taken this view of the matter, since every section of the Christian church has a different form of government. To contend for uniformity in this matter, would be to re-establish the papacy; for without the infallibility of the pope there is obviously no deciding what form of church government is prescribed in the gospel. Simply, in my opinion, because no form of church government is there prescribed." This reasoning, I think, fairly admits of two replies. First, if no form of church government at all is prescribed in the Scriptures, then all objection to the papacy itself, as a system of church government, falls to the ground; and, secondly, although many *particulars* of ecclesiastical discipline are left to Christian liberty and discretion, to be regulated, in many instances, by the necessity of the case, yet *negatively* so much is taught as to leave little to be desired by the greatest lover of uniformity. The omission of prelatical distinctions in the church would of itself be tantamount to a prohibition, even if we were not abundantly supplied with general principles applicable to nearly every variety of circumstance. Let any one, for example, compare the words of the apostle—"Call no man master on earth: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren"—with the system of prelatical domination in every phase it has exhibited throughout its long and disastrous history, and he will not need to search further for the decision of Scripture.

The appeals of the supporters of prelacy to the Old Testament, which had recently been re-produced by the primate of Armagh, Milton thus deals with: "The primate, in his discourse about the original of episcopacy newly revised, begins thus: 'The ground of episcopacy is fetched partly from the pattern prescribed by God in the Old Testament, and partly from the imitation thereof brought in by the apostles.' Herein I must entreat to be excused of the desire I have to be satisfied how, for example, the ground of

episcopacy is fetched partly from example of the Old Testament, by whom next, and by whose authority. Secondly, how the church government under the gospel can be rightly called an imitation of that in the Old Testament; for that the gospel is the end and fulfilling of the law, our liberty also from the bondage of the law, I plainly read. How then the ripe age of the gospel should be put to school again, and learn to govern herself from the infancy of the law, the stronger to imitate the weaker, the freeman to follow the captive, the learned to be lessoned by the rude, will be a hard undertaking to evince from any of those principles which either art or inspiration hath written."*

Milton next addresses himself to the most cherished dogma of his opponents—that the system of prelacy secures uniformity of opinion, and represses the "sin of schism." The passages which are necessary to put the reader in full possession of Milton's argument, though long, must be introduced, as an example of the overwhelming momentum of his controversial eloquence:—"Do they keep away schism? If to bring a numb and chill stupidity of soul, an unactive blindness of mind, upon the people by their leaden doctrine, or no doctrine at all; if to persecute all knowing and zealous Christians by the violence of their courts, be to keep away schism, they keep schism away indeed: and by this kind of discipline all Italy and Spain is as purely and politically kept from schism as England hath been by them. With as good a plea might the dead-palsy boast to a man, It is I that free you from stitches and pains, and the troublesome feeling of cold and heat, of wounds and strokes: if I were gone, all these would molest you. The winter might as well vaunt itself against the spring, I destroy all noisome and rank weeds, I keep down all pestilent vapours; yes, and all wholesome herbs, and all fresh dews, by your violent and hide-bound frost: but when the gentle west winds shall open the fruitful bosom of the earth, thus overgirded by

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 450.

your imprisonment, then the flowers put forth and spring, and then the sun shall scatter the mists, and the manuring hand of the tiller shall root up all that burdens the soil without thank to your bondage. But far worse than any frozen captivity is the bondage of prelates; for that other, if it keep down anything which is good within the earth, so doth it likewise that which is ill; but these let out freely the ill, and keep down the good, or else keep down the lesser ill, and let out the greatest. Be ashamed at last to tell the parliament, ye curb schismatics whenas they know ye cherish and side with papists, and are now as it were one party with them, and it is said they help to petition for ye. Can we believe that your government strains in good earnest at the petty gnats of schism, whenas we see it makes nothing to swallow the camel heresy of Rome, but that indeed your throats are of the right pharisaical strain. . . . If we go down, say you, (as if Adrian's wall were broken,) a flood of sects will rush in. What sects? What are their opinions? Give us the inventory. It will appear both by your former prosecutions and your present instances, that they are only such to speak of, as are offended with your lawless government, your ceremonies, your liturgy, an extract from the mass-book translated. But that they should be contemners of public prayer, and churches used without superstition, I trust God will manifest it ere long to be as false a slander as your former slanders against the Scots. Noise it till ye be hoarse, that a rabble of sects will come in; it will be answered ye, No rabble, sir priest; but an unanimous multitude of good protestants will then join to the church, which now, because of you, stand separated. This will be the dreadful consequence of your removal. As for those terrible names of sectaries and schismatics, which ye have got together, we know your manner of fight: when the quiver of your arguments, which is ever thin and weakly stored, after the first brunt is quite empty, your course is to betake ye to your other quiver of slander, wherein lies your best archery. And

whom you could not move by sophistical arguing, them you think to confute by scandalous misnaming; thereby inciting the blinder sort of people to mislike and deride sound doctrine and good Christianity, under two or three vile and hateful terms. But if we could easily endure and dissolve your doughtiest reasons in argument, we shall more easily bear the worst of your unreasonableness in calumny and false report: especially being foretold by Christ, that if he our master was by your predecessors called Samaritan and Beelzebub, we must not think it strange if his best disciples in the reformation, as at first by those of your tribe they were called Lollards and Hussites, so now by you be termed Puritans and Brownists. But my hope is, that the people of England will not suffer themselves to be juggled thus out of their faith and religion by a mist of names cast before their eyes, but will search wisely by the Scriptures, and look quite through this fraudulent aspersion of a disgraceful name into the things themselves: knowing that the primitive Christians in their times were accounted such as are now called Familists and Adamites, or worse. *And many on the prelatie side, like the church of Sardis, have a name to live, and yet are dead; to be protestants, and are indeed papists in most of their principles. Thus persuaded, this your old fallacy we shall soon unmask, and quickly apprehend how you prevent schism, and who are your schismatics.* But what if we prevent and hinder all good means of preventing schism? That way which the apostles used, was to call a council: from which, by anything that can be learned from the fifteenth of the Acts, no faithful Christian was debarred, to whom knowledge and piety might give entrance. Of such a council as this every parochial consistory is a right homogeneous and constituting part, being in itself, as it were, a little synod, and towards a general assembly moving upon her own basis in an even and firm progression, as those smaller squares in battle unite in one great cube, the main phalanx, an emblem of truth and steadfastness.

Whereas, on the other side, prelacy ascending by a gradual monarchy from bishop to archbishop, from thence to primate, and from thence, for there can be no reason yielded neither in nature nor in religion, wherefore, if it have lawfully mounted thus high, it should not be a lordly ascendant in the horoscope of the church, from primate to patriarch, and so to pope: I say, prelacy thus ascending in a continual pyramid upon pretence to perfect the church's unity, if notwithstanding it be found most needful, yea, the utmost help to darn up the rents of schism by calling a council, what does it but teach us that prelacy is of no force to effect this work, which she boasts to be her masterpiece; and that her pyramid aspires and sharpens to ambition, not to perfection or unity? This we know, that as often as any great schism disparts the church, and synods be proclaimed, the presbyters have as great right there, and as free vote of old, as the bishops, which the canon law conceals not. So that prelacy, if she will seek to close up divisions in the church, must be forced to dissolve and unmake her own pyramidal figure, which she affirms to be of such uniting power, whenas indeed it is the most dividing and schismatical form that geometricians know of, and must be fain to inglobe or incube herself among the presbyters; which she hating to do, sends her haughty prelates from all parts with their forked mitres, the badge of schism, or the stamp of his cloven foot whom they serve, I think, who, according to their hierarchies acuminating still higher and higher in a cone of prelacy, instead of healing up the gashes of the church, as it happens in such pointed bodies meeting, fall to gore one another with their sharp spires for upper place and precedence, till the council itself proves the greatest schism of all. . . . I could put you in mind what counsel Clement, a fellow-labourer with the apostles, gave to the presbyters of Corinth, whom the people, though unjustly, sought to remove. 'Who among you,' saith he, 'is noble-minded, who is pitiful, who is charitable? let him say thus, If for me this

sedition, this enmity, these differences be, I willingly depart, I go my ways; only let the flock of Christ be at peace with the presbyters that are set over it. He that shall do this,’ saith he, ‘shall get him great honour in the Lord, and all places will receive him.’ This was Clement’s counsel to good and holy men, that they should depart rather from their just office than by their stay to ravel out the seamless garment of concord in the church. But I have better counsel to give the prelates, and far more acceptable to their ears; this advice, in my opinion, is fitter for them: Cling fast to your pontifical sees, bate not, quit yourselves like barons, stand to the utmost for your haughty courts and votes in parliament. Still tell us, that you prevent schism, though schism and combustion be the very issue of your bodies, your first-born; and set your country a bleeding in a prelatical mutiny, to fight for your pomp, and that ill-favoured weed of temporal honour, that sits dishonourably upon your laic shoulders; that ye may be fat and fleshy, swoln with high thoughts and big with mischievous designs, when God comes to visit upon you all this fourscore years’ vexation of his church under your Egyptian tyranny. For certainly of all those blessed souls which you have persecuted, and those miserable ones which you have lost, the just vengeance does not sleep.”*

In the commencement of the second book of the “Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy,” Milton records those particulars respecting his education and continental travels which have been already presented to the reader. Recurring to his subject, he next points out three cardinal respects in which prelacy stands opposed to Christianity. The first of these is, that its lordly assumptions are at variance with the precepts and example of the Great Author of Christianity, who “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” The second is, that the pomp and ceremony of prelacy are equally at variance with the genius

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 462—468.

and design of the Christian religion ; and the third, "that prelatical jurisdiction opposeth the reason and end of the gospel and of state."

On this last topic, Milton writes with the intensest fervour which the ecclesiastical corruption and infernal malice of persecution he witnessed in his own day, could kindle. He shows that no civil or magisterial jurisdiction was ever conferred on the church, but only the powers of spiritual censure, and describes the terrors of these functions as compared with the contemptible mockery of discipline exhibited by the prelates, in one of the most remarkable passages to be found in his writings. After supposing the case of a Christian who had not only fallen into sin, but shown himself insensible to the reproofs, entreaties, and prayers of his brethren, he adds: "But if neither the regard of himself, nor the reverence of his elders and friends prevail with him to leave his vicious appetite, then as the time urges, such engines of terror God hath given into the hand of his minster, as to search the tenderest angles of the heart: one while he shakes his stubbornness with racking convulsions nigh despair; otherwhiles with deadly corrosives he gripes the very roots of his faulty liver to bring him to life through the entry of death. Hereto the whole church beseech him, beg of him, deplore him, pray for him. After all this performed with what patience and attendance is possible, and no relenting on his part, having done the utmost of their cure, in the name of God and of the church they dissolve their fellowship with him, and holding forth the dreadful sponge of excommunication, pronounce him wiped out of the list of God's inheritance, and in the custody of Satan till he repent. Which horrid sentence though it touch neither life nor limb, nor any worldly possession, yet has it such a penetrating force, that swifter than any chemical sulphur, or that lightning which harms not the skin, and rifles the entrails, it scorches the inmost soul. Yet even this terrible denouncement is left to the church for no

other cause but to be as a rough and vehement cleansing medicine, where the malady is obdurate, a mortifying to life, a kind of saving by undoing. And it may be truly said, that as the mercies of wicked men are cruelties, so the cruelties of the church are mercies. For if repentance sent from heaven meet this lost wanderer, and draw him out of that steep journey wherein he was hasting towards destruction, to come and reconcile to the church, if he bring with him his bill of health, and that he is now clear of infection, and of no danger to the other sheep ; then with incredible expressions of joy all his brethren receive him, and set before him those perfumed banquets of Christian consolation ; with precious ointments bathing and fomenting the old, and now to be forgotten stripes, which terror and shame had inflicted ; and thus with heavenly solaces they cheer up his humble remorse, till he regain his first health and felicity. This is the approved way, which the gospel prescribes, these are the ‘ spiritual weapons of holy censure, and ministerial warfare, not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.’ What could be done more for the healing and reclaiming that divine particle of God’s breathing, the soul ? and what could be done less ? he that would hide his faults from such a wholesome curing as this, and count it a twofold punishment, as some do, is like a man that having foul diseases about him, perishes for shame, and the fear he has of a rigorous incision to come upon his flesh. We shall be able by this time to discern whether prelatical jurisdiction be contrary to the gospel or no. First, therefore, the government of the gospel being economical and paternal, that is, of such a family where there be no servants, but all sons in obedience, not in servility, as cannot be denied by him that lives but within the sound of scripture ; how can the prelates justify to have turned the fatherly orders of Christ’s household, the

blessed meekness of his lowly roof, those ever-open and inviting doors of his dwelling-house, which delight to be frequented with only filial access; how can they justify to have turned these domestic privileges into the bar of a proud judicial court, where fees and clamours keep shop and drive a trade, where bribery and corruption solicits, paltering the free and moneyless power of discipline with a carnal satisfaction by the purse? Contrition, humiliation, confession, the very sighs of a repentant spirit, are there sold by the penny. That undeflowered and unblemishable simplicity of the gospel, not she herself, for that could never be, but a false-whited, a lawny resemblance of her, like that airborne Helena in the fables, made by the sorcery of prelates, instead of calling her disciples from the receipt of custom, is now turned publican herself; and gives up her body to a mercenary whoredom under those fornicated arches, which she calls God's house, and in the sight of those her altars, which she hath set up to be adored, makes merchandise of the bodies and souls of men. Rejecting purgatory for no other reason, as it seems, than because her greediness cannot defer, but had rather use the utmost extortion of redeemed penances in this life."*

In conclusion, Milton thus declares the enslaving and ruinous influence of prelacy on the state and the monarch, and pleads for its entire extinction. "I shall show briefly, ere I conclude, that the prelates, as they are to the subjects a calamity, so are they the greatest underminers and betrayers of the monarch, to whom they seem to be most favourable. I cannot better liken the state and person of a king than to that mighty Nazarite Samson; who being disciplined from his birth in the precepts and the practice of temperance and sobriety, without the strong drink of injurious and excessive desires, grows up to a noble strength and perfection with those his illustrious and sunny locks, the laws, waving and curling about his godlike shoulders. And while he keeps

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 498—500.

them about him undiminished and unshorn, he may with the jawbone of an ass, that is, with the word of his meanest officer, suppress and put to confusion thousands of those that rise against his just power. But laying down his head among the strumpet flatteries of prelates, while he sleeps and thinks no harm, they wickedly shaving off all those bright and weighty tresses of his law, and just prerogatives, which were his ornament and strength, deliver him over to indirect and violent counsels, which, as those Philistines, put out the fair and far-sighted eyes of his natural discerning, and make him grind in the prisonhouse of their sinister ends and practices upon him: till he, knowing this prelatical razor to have bereft him of his wonted might, nourish again his puissant hair, the golden beams of law and right; and they sternly shook, thunder with ruin upon the heads of those his evil counsellors, but not without great affliction to himself. . . . For the which, and for all their former misdeeds, whereof this book and many volumes more cannot contain the moiety, I shall move ye, lords, in the behalf I dare say of many thousand good Christians, to let your justice and speedy sentence pass against this great malefactor, prelacy. And yet in the midst of rigour I would beseech ye to think of mercy; and such a mercy, (I fear I shall overshoot with a desire to save this falling prelacy,) such a mercy (if I may venture to say it) as may exceed that which for only ten righteous persons would have saved Sodom. Not that I dare advise ye to contend with God, whether he or you shall be more merciful, but in your wise esteems to balance the offences of those peccant cities with these enormous riots of ungodly misrule, that prelacy hath wrought both in the church of Christ, and in the state of this kingdom. And if ye think ye may with a pious presumption strive to go beyond God in mercy, I shall not be one now that would dissuade ye. Though God for less than ten just persons would not spare Sodom, yet if you can find, after due search, but only one good thing in prelacy, either to reli-

gion or civil government, to king or parliament, to prince or people, to law, liberty, wealth, or learning, spare her, let her live, let her spread among ye, till with her shadow all your dignities and honours, and all the glory of the land be darkened and obscured. But, on the contrary, if she be found to be malignant, hostile, destructive to all these, as nothing can be surer, then let your severe and impartial doom imitate the divine vengeance; rain down your punishing force upon this godless and oppressing government, and bring such a dead sea of subversion upon her, that she may never in this land rise more to afflict the holy reformed church, and the elect people of God.”*

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 506—508.

CHAPTER VI.

MILTON PUBLISHES HIS "ANIMADVERSIONS ON THE REMONSTRANTS' DEFENCE"—THE MOST STRIKING PASSAGE FROM THIS WORK—THE EPISCOPALIAN CLAIM TO THE RIGHT OF ORDINATION—APPEARANCE OF THE "MODEST CONFUTATION"—MILTON REPLIES IN THE "APOLOGY FOR SMECTYMNUS"—ANALYSIS OF THE WORK—DEFENCE OF THE PARLIAMENT—RELICS OF ROME IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.

IT was, as has been mentioned before, a spiteful expression of Dr. Johnson, that Milton "vapoured away his patriotism in a private boarding-school." So far is this from the truth, that, in the year 1641, immediately after his return to England, and in the thirty-third year of his age, he produced no fewer than five treatises on the most important subject that agitated the minds of that day. His two books of "Reformation in England," his "Treatise on Prelatical Episcopacy," and that entitled the "Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy," have already been considered. The fifth remains to be noticed. A pamphlet had been published, written by five presbyterian ministers, and entitled "Smectymnus," a word formed with the initial letters of the names of the authors, Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, and William Spurston. This treatise excited no ordinary degree of attention, and elicited a reply from Bishop Hall, under the title of a "Defence of the Remonstrance." This second appearance of Bishop Hall on the arena of controversy again summoned Milton from his more cherished pursuits: he replied in a work, entitled "Animadversions on the Remonstrants' Defence." It was thrown into the form of a dialogue, one part of which is sustained by the author, while the other

is put into the mouth of his opponent, and drawn from his "Defence of the Remonstrance."

This style of composition afforded an opportunity which Milton was not slow to embrace, of visiting his antagonist with that severity which, in too many instances, defaced the controversies of the day. Of his triumphant mastery over the Bishop, no unprejudiced reader can entertain a doubt; though it must be admitted that in this, as in some other of Milton's controversial writings, his asperity, occasionally descending to coarseness, was less consistent with his own dignity, than with the deserts of his antagonist. He, however, did not content himself with ebullitions of indignant satire, and with "scattering about him the instruments of pain." The "Animadversions" contain some majestic passages, the animation of which is inspired not by the malignity of the attack, but by the grandeur of the subject, and the magnitude of the interests imperilled. One of these is so characteristic of the genius of Milton, when led by the habit of his mind to vent its excitement in expatiating on the grandest subjects of human contemplation, that it cannot be omitted in this place.

"In this age, Britons, God hath reformed his church after many hundred years of popish corruption; in this age he hath freed us from the intolerable yoke of prelates and papal discipline; in this age he hath renewed our protestation against all those yet remaining dregs of superstition. Let us all go, every true protested Briton, throughout the three kingdoms, and render thanks to God the Father of light, and Fountain of heavenly grace, and to his Son Christ our Lord, leaving this Remonstrant and his adherents to their own designs; and let us recount even here without delay, the patience and long-suffering that God hath used towards our blindness and hardness time after time. For he being equally near to his whole creation of mankind, and of free power to turn his beneficent and fatherly regard to what region or kingdom he pleases, hath yet ever had this

island under the special indulgent eye of his providence ; and pitying us the first of all other nations, after he had decreed to purify and renew his church that lay wallowing in idolatrous pollutions, sent first to us a healing messenger to touch softly our sores, and carry a gentle hand over our wounds : he knocked once and twice, and came again opening our drowsy eyelids leisurely by that glimmering light which Wickliff and his followers dispersed ; and still taking off by degrees the inveterate scales from our nigh-perished sight, purged also our deaf ears, and prepared them to attend his second warning trumpet in our grandsire’s days. How else could they have been able to have received the sudden assault of his reforming Spirit, warring against human principles, and carnal sense, the pride of flesh, that still cried up antiquity, custom, canons, councils, and laws, and cried down the truth for novelty, schism, profaneness, and sacrilege ? whenas we that have lived so long in abundant light, besides the sunny reflection of all the neighbouring churches, have yet our hearts riveted with those old opinions, and so obstructed and benumbed with the same fleshly reasonings, which in our forefathers soon melted and gave way, against the morning beam of reformation. If God had left undone this whole work, so contrary to flesh and blood, till these times, how should we have yielded to his heavenly call had we been taken, as they were, in the starkness of our ignorance ; that yet, after all these spiritual preparatives and purgations, have our earthly apprehensions so clammed and furred with the old leaven ? O if we freeze at noon after their early thaw, let us fear lest the sun for ever hide himself and turn his orient steps from our ingrateful horizon, justly condemned to be eternally benighted ! Which dreadful judgment, O thou the ever-begotten Light and perfect Image of the Father ! intercede, may never come upon us, as we trust thou hast ; for thou hast opened our difficult and sad times, and given us an unexpected breathing after our long oppressions : thou hast done justice upon those that tyrann-

nized over us, while some men wavered and admired a vain shadow of wisdom in a tongue nothing slow to utter guile, though thou hast taught us to admire only that which is good, and to count that only praiseworthy, which is grounded upon thy divine precepts. Thou hast discovered the plots, and frustrated the hopes, of all the wicked in the land, and put to shame the persecutors of thy church: thou hast made our false prophets to be found a lie in the sight of all the people, and chased them with sudden confusion and amazement before the redoubled brightness of thy descending cloud, that now covers thy tabernacle. Who is there that cannot trace thee now in thy beamy walk through the midst of thy sanctuary, amidst those golden candlesticks, which have long suffered a dimness amongst us through the violence of those that had seized them, and were more taken with the mention of their gold than of their starry light; teaching the doctrine of Balaam, to cast a stumbling-block before thy servants, commanding them to eat things sacrificed to idols, and forcing them to fornication? Come therefore, O thou that hast the seven stars in thy right hand, appoint thy chosen priests according to their orders and courses of old, to minister before thee, and duly to press and pour out the consecrated oil into thy holy and ever-burning lamps. Thou hast sent out the spirit of prayer upon thy servants over all the land to this effect, and stirred up their vows as the sound of many waters about thy throne. Every one can say, that now certainly thou hast visited this land, and hast not forgotten the utmost corners of the earth, in a time when men had thought that thou wast gone up from us to the furthest end of the heavens, and hadst left to do marvellously among the sons of these last ages! O perfect and accomplish thy glorious acts! for men may leave their works unfinished, but thou art a God, thy name is perfection: shouldst thou bring us thus far onward from Egypt, to destroy us in this wilderness, though we deserve, yet thy great name would suffer in the rejoicing of thine enemies, and the deluded hope of all thy

servants. When thou hast settled peace in the church, and righteous judgment in the kingdom, then shall all thy saints address their voices of joy and triumph to thee, standing on the shore of that Red Sea into which our enemies had almost driven us. And he that now for haste snatches up a plain ungarnished present as a thankoffering to thee, which could not be deferred in regard of thy so many late deliverances wrought for us one upon another, may then perhaps take up a harp, and sing thee an elaborate song to generations. In that day it shall no more be said as in scorn, this or that was never held so till this present age, when men have better learnt that the times and seasons pass along under thy feet to go and come at thy bidding: and as thou didst dignify our fathers’ days with many revelations above all the foregoing ages, since thou tookest the flesh; so thou canst vouchsafe to us (though unworthy) as large a portion of thy Spirit as thou plearest: for who shall prejudice thy all-governing will? seeing the power of thy grace is not passed away with the primitive times, as fond and faithless men imagine, but thy kingdom is now at hand, and thou standing at the door. Come forth out of thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth! put on the visible robes of thy imperial majesty, take up that unlimited sceptre which thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed thee; for now the voice of thy bride calls thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed!” *

One other passage, written in a different vein, and disposing of the episcopal claim to the right of ordination, must also be presented to the reader before dismissing the “Animadversions upon the Remonstrants’ Defence.” “As for ordination, what is it, but the laying on of hands, an outward sign or symbol of admission? It creates nothing, it confers nothing; it is the inward calling of God that makes a minister, and his own painful study and diligence that manures and improves his ministerial gifts. In the primitive times, many, before ever they had received ordination from the apostles, had done

* Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 70, 72.

the church noble service, as Apollos and others. It is but an orderly form of receiving a man already fitted, and committing to him a particular charge; the employment of preaching is as holy, and far more excellent; the care also and judgment to be used in the winning of souls, which is thought to be sufficient in every worthy minister, is an ability above that which is required in ordination; for many may be able to judge who is fit to be made a minister, that would not be found fit to be made ministers themselves; as it will not be denied that he may be the competent judge of a neat picture, or elegant poem, that cannot limn the like. Why, therefore, we should constitute a superior order in the church to perform an office which is not only every minister's function, but inferior also to that which he has a confessed right to, and why this superiority should remain thus usurped, some wise Epimenides tell us. Now for jurisdiction, this dear saint of the prelates, it will be best to consider, first, what it is: that sovereign Lord, who in the discharge of his holy anointment from God the Father, which made him supreme bishop of our souls, was so humble as to say, 'Who made me a judge, or a divider over ye?' hath taught us that a churchman's jurisdiction is no more but to watch over his flock in season, and out of season, to deal by sweet and efficacious instructions, gentle admonitions, and sometimes rounder reproofs: against negligence or obstinacy, will be required a rousing volley of pastoral threatenings; against a persisting stubbornness, or the fear of a reprobate sense, a timely separation from the flock by that interdictive sentence, lest his conversation unprohibited, or unbranded, might breathe a pestilential murrain into the other sheep. In sum, his jurisdiction is to see the thriving and prospering of that which he hath planted: what other work the prelates have found for chancellors and suffragans, delegates and officials, with all the hell-pestering rabble of sumners and apparitors, is but an invasion upon the temporal magistrate, and affected by them as men that are not ashamed of

the ensign and banner of antichrist. But true evangelical jurisdiction or discipline is no more, as was said, than for a minister to see to the thriving and prospering of that which he hath planted. And which is the worthiest work of these two—to plant as every minister’s office is equally with the bishops, or to tend that which is planted, which the blind and undiscerning prelates call jurisdiction, and would appropriate to themselves as a business of higher dignity? Have patience, therefore, a little, and hear a law case. A certain man of large possessions had a fair garden, and kept therein an honest and laborious servant, whose skill and profession was to set or sow all wholesome herbs, and delightful flowers, according to every season, and whatever else was to be done in a well-husbanded nursery of plants and fruits. Now, when the time was come that he should cut his hedges, prune his trees, look to his tender slips, and pluck up the weeds that hindered their growth, he gets him up by break of day, and makes account to do what was needful in his garden: and who would think that any other should know better than he how the day’s work was to be spent? Yet, for all this, there comes another strange gardener, that never knew the soil, never handled a dibble or spade, to set the least potherb that grew there, much less had endured an hour’s sweat or chilliness, and yet challenges as his right the binding or unbinding of every flower, the clipping of every bush, the weeding and worming of every bed, both in that and all other gardens thereabout. The honest gardener, that ever since the day-peep, till now the sun was grown somewhat rank, had wrought painfully about his banks and seedplots, at his commanding voice turns suddenly about with some wonder; and although he could have well be-teemed to have thanked him for the ease he proffered, yet, loving his own handywork, modestly refused him; telling him withal, that, for his part, if he had thought much of his own pains, he could for once have committed the work to one of his fellow-labourers, forasmuch as it is well known

to be a matter of less skill and less labour to keep a garden handsome, than it is to plant it, or contrive it; and that he had already performed himself. No, said the stranger, this is neither for you nor your fellows to meddle with, but for me only, that am for this purpose in dignity far above you; and the provision which the lord of the soil allows me in this office is, and that with good reason, tenfold your wages. The gardener smiled, and shook his head; but what was determined, I cannot tell you till the end of this Parliament.”*

Early in the year 1642 appeared an anonymous reply to the “*Animadversions*,” supposed to have been written by the son of the prelate (Bishop Hall) with whom Milton had dealt so unsparingly. It bore the title of “*a Modest Confutation against a Slandrous and Scurrilous Libel*,” and was evidently written under the strongest impulse of resentment. The writer heaped upon Milton the most atrocious and unfounded calumnies, and the degree of malignity he displayed may be estimated by a single passage, in which he called upon all Christians to stone his opponent “as a miscreant whose impunity would be their crime.” This drew from Milton his “*Apology for Smectymnuus*,” which was published in the year 1642, and, in accordance with the nature of the attacks which occasioned it, was to a considerable extent a vindication of himself. Still it must ever occupy a high rank among the prose works of Milton. “We may well wonder,” says Mr. St. John, “that out of a gladiatorial controversy of this sanguinary kind, anything should have arisen so richly teeming with beautiful thoughts, so full of youthful and cheering reminiscences—so varied, so polished, so vehemently eloquent, as the ‘*Apology for Smectymnuus*,’ which, as a noble and justifiable burst of egotism, has never, perhaps, in any language been excelled.”

Milton commences by vindicating his right to take the part he had adopted in the great controversy of the day, notwithstanding his youthful age, and the fact that the object of his hostility was a system which the State had been wont to

cherish and honour. He next justifies the warmth with which he had defended religious liberty, by quoting the words of Gregory Nyssen, justifying his asperity in the defence of his brother Basil. "It was not for himself," he said, "but in the cause of his brother; and in such cases, perhaps, it is worthier pardon to be angry than to be cooler." Then having cleared himself from the charges of immorality brought against his university life, he thus alludes to his subsequent studies:—

"Thus, from the laureat fraternity of poets, riper years and the ceaseless round of study and reading led me to the shady spaces of philosophy; but chiefly to the divine volumes of Plato, and his equal, Xenophon: where, if I should tell ye what I learnt of chastity and love, I mean that which is truly so, whose charming cup is only virtue, which she bears in her hand to those who are worthy (the rest are cheated with a thick intoxicating potion, which a certain sorceress, the abuser of love's name, carries about); and how the first and chiefest office of love begins and ends in the soul, producing those happy twins of her divine generation, knowledge and virtue. With such abstracted sublimities as these, it might be worth your listening, readers, as I may one day hope to have ye in a still time, when there shall be no chiding."

His opponents had further reproached him for his satirical vein, and for those severities against the prelates which he designates "libels." In a passing notice of the first charge, he shelters himself under the authority of Horace, alluding to two passages, one of which occurs in the tenth satire of the first book:—

— "Ridiculum acri

Fortius et melius magnas plerumque secat res;"

and to another in the first satire of the same book:—

— "Quanquam ridentem dicere verum

Quid vetat? ut pueris olim dant crustula blandi

Doctores, elementa velint ut discere prima."

The charge of libelling he thus retorts:—"Neither can religion receive any wound by disgrace thrown upon the

prelates, since religion and they surely were never in such amity. They rather are the men who have wounded religion, and their stripes must heal her. I might also tell them what Electra, in Sophocles, a wise virgin, answered her wicked mother, who thought herself too violently reproved by her the daughter:—

“ ’Tis you that say it, not I; you do the deeds,
And your ungodly deeds find me the words.”

If, therefore, the Remonstrant complains of libels, it is because he feels them to be right aimed. For I ask again, as before in the ‘Animadversions,’ how long is it since he disrelished libels? We never heard the least mutter of his voice against them while they flew abroad without control or check, defaming the Scots and Puritans.” *

From justifying himself, he next turns to the Defence of the Parliament, whom his opponent had similarly slandered. This body he vindicates in the following stately passage:—

“ Now although it be a digression from the ensuing matter, yet because it shall not be said I am apter to blame others than to make trial myself, and that I may, after this harsh discord, touch upon a smoother string, awhile to entertain myself and him that list, with some more pleasing fit, and not the least to testify the gratitude which I owe to those public benefactors of their country, for the share I enjoy in the common peace and good by their incessant labours; I shall be so troublesome to this disclaimer for once, as to show him what he might have better said in their praise; wherein I must mention only some few things of many, for more than that to a digression may not be granted. Although certainly their actions are worthy not thus to be spoken of by the way, yet if hereafter it befall me to attempt something more answerable to their great merits, I perceive how hopeless it will be to reach the height of their praises at the accomplishment of that expectation that waits upon their noble deeds, the unfinishing whereof already surpasses what others before

* Prose Works, vol. iii. p. 133.

them have left enacted with their utmost performance through many ages. And to the end we may be confident that what they do proceeds neither from uncertain opinion nor sudden counsels, but from mature wisdom, deliberate virtue, and dear affection to the public good, I shall begin at that which made them likeliest in the eyes of good men to effect those things for the recovery of decayed religion and the commonwealth, which they who were best minded had long wished for, but few, as the times were then desperate, had the courage to hope for.

“First, therefore, the most of them being either of ancient and high nobility, or at least of known and well-reputed ancestry, which is a great advantage towards virtue one way, but in respect of wealth, ease, and flattery, which accompany a nice and tender education, is as much a hindrance another way; the good which lay before them they took, in imitating the worthiest of their progenitors: and the evils which assaulted their younger years by the temptation of riches, high birth, and that usual bringing up, perhaps too favourable and too remiss, through the strength of an inbred goodness, and with the help of divine grace, that had marked them out for no mean purposes, they nobly overcame. Yet had they a greater danger to cope with; for being trained up in the knowledge of learning, and sent to those places which were intended to be the seed-plots of piety and the liberal arts, but were become the nurseries of superstition and empty speculation, as they were prosperous against those vices which grow upon youth out of idleness and superfluity, so were they happy in working off the harms of their abused studies and labours; correcting, by the clearness of their own judgment, the errors of their misinstruction, and were, as David was, wiser than their teachers. And although their lot fell into such times, and to be bred in such places, where if they chanced to be taught anything good, or of their own accord had learnt it, they might see that presently untaught them by the custom and ill example

of their elders; so far in all probability was their youth from being misled by the single power of example, as their riper years were known to be unmoved with the baits of preferment, and undaunted for any discouragement and terror, which appeared often to those that loved religion and their native liberty; which two things God hath inseparably knit together, and hath disclosed to us, that they who seek to corrupt our religion, are the same that would enthrall our civil liberty.

“ Thus, in the midst of all disadvantages and disrespects, (some also at last not without imprisonment and open disgraces in the cause of their country,) having given proof of themselves to be better made and framed by nature to the love and practice of virtue, than others under the holiest precepts and best examples have been headstrong and prone to vice; and having, in all the trials of a firm ingrafted honesty, not oftener buckled in the conflict than given every opposition the foil: this, moreover, was added by favour from Heaven, as an ornament and happiness to their virtue, that it should be neither obscure in the opinion of men, nor eclipsed for want of matter equal to illustrate itself; God and man consenting in joint approbation to choose them out as worthiest above others to be both the great reformers of the Church and the restorers of the commonwealth. Nor did they deceive that expectation which with the eyes and desires of their country was fixed upon them: for no sooner did the force of so much united excellence meet in one globe of brightness and efficacy, but, encountering the dazzled resistance of tyranny, they gave not over, though their enemies were strong and subtle, till they had laid her grovelling upon the fatal block; with one stroke winning again our lost liberties and charters, which our forefathers, after so many battles, could scarce maintain.

“ And meeting next, as I may so resemble, with the second life of tyranny, (for she was grown an ambiguous monster, and to be slain in two shapes,) guarded with superstition, which hath no small power to captivate the minds of

men otherwise most wise, they neither were taken with her mitred hypocrisy, nor terrified with the push of her bestial horns, but breaking them, immediately forced her to unbend the pontifical brow, and recoil ; which repulse only given to the prelates (that we may imagine how happy their removal would be) was the producement of such glorious effects and consequences in the Church, that if I should compare them with those exploits of highest fame in poems and panegyrics of old, I am certain it would but diminish and impair their worth, who are now my argument : for those ancient worthies delivered men from such tyrants as were content to enforce only an outward obedience, letting the mind be as free as it could ; but these have freed us from a doctrine of tyranny, that offered violence and corruption even to the inward persuasion. They set at liberty nations and cities of men, good and bad mixed together ; but these, opening the prisons and dungeons, called out of darkness and bonds the elect martyrs and witnesses of their Redeemer. They restored the body to ease and wealth ; but these, the oppressed conscience to that freedom which is the chief prerogative of the gospel ; taking off these cruel burdens imposed not by necessity, as other tyrants are wont, or the safeguard of their lives, but laid upon our necks by the strange wilfulness and wantonness of a needless and jolly persecutor, called Indifference. Lastly, some of these ancient deliverers have had immortal praises for preserving their citizens from a famine of corn. But these, by this only repulse of an unholy hierarchy, almost in a moment replenished with saving knowledge their country, nigh famished for want of that which should feed their souls. All this being done while two armies in the field stood gazing on : the one in reverence of such nobleness quietly gave back and dislodged ; the other, spite of the unruliness and doubted fidelity in some regiments, was either persuaded or compelled to disband and retire home.”*

Towards the conclusion of his performance, Milton’s

* Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 145—148.

nameless antagonist was induced to interpolate into his calumnious attack a vaunting panegyric on the Liturgy, as "preserving unity and piety." This elicited the following animated reply with reference to unity and piety:—"Nor is unity less broken, especially by our Liturgy, though this author would almost bring the communion of saints to a communion of liturgical words. For what other reformed church holds communion with us by our Liturgy, and does not rather dislike it? And among ourselves, who knows it not to have been a perpetual cause of disunion? Lastly, it hinders piety rather than sets it forward, being more apt to weaken the spiritual faculties, if the people be not weaned from it in due time; as the daily pouring in of hot waters quenches the natural heat. For not only the body and the mind, but also the improvement of God's Spirit, is quickened by using. Whereas they who will ever adhere to liturgy, bring themselves in the end to such a pass, by overmuch learning, as to lose even the legs of their devotion."

After some further references to the "errors, tautologies, and impertinences" of the Liturgy, he concludes with the following appeal:—"Hark ye, prelates, is this your glorious mother of England, who, whenas Christ hath taught her to pray, thinks it not enough unless she add thereto the teaching of Antichrist? How can we believe ye would refuse to take the stipend of Rome, when ye shame not to live upon the almsbasket of her prayers? Will ye persuade us that ye can curse Rome from your hearts, when none but Rome must teach ye to pray? Abraham disdained to take so much as a thread or shoe-latchet from the king of Sodom, though no foe of his, but a wicked king: and shall we receive our prayers at the bounty of our more wicked enemies, whose gifts are no gifts, but the instruments of our bane? Alas! that the Spirit of God should blow as an uncertain wind, should so mistake his inspiring, so misbestow his gifts, promised only to the elect, that the idolatrous should find words acceptable to present to God with, and abound to their

neighbours, while the true professors of the gospel can find nothing of their own worth the constituting, wherewith to worship God in public! Consider if this be to magnify the Church of England, and not rather to display her nakedness to all the world.

“If we have indeed given a bill of divorce to popery and superstition, why do we not say, as to a divorced wife, ‘Those things which are yours, take them all with you, and they shall sweep after you!’ Why were we not thus wise at our parting from Rome? Ah! like a crafty adulteress, she forgot not all her smooth looks and enticing words at her parting: ‘Yet keep these letters, these tokens, and these few ornaments. I am not all so greedy of what is mine; let them preserve with you the memory’—of what I am? No, but—‘of what I was; once fair and lovely in your eyes.’ Thus did those tender-hearted reformers dotingly suffer themselves to be overcome with harlot’s language. And she, like a witch, but with a contrary policy, did not take something of theirs, that she still might have power to bewitch them, but for the same intent left something of her own behind her. They object that if we must forsake all that is Rome’s, we must bid adieu to our creed; and I had thought our creed had been of the apostles, for so it bears title. But if it be hers, let her take it. WE CAN WANT NO CREED, SO LONG AS WE WANT NOT THE SCRIPTURES.”

CHAPTER VII.

MILTON'S MARRIAGE—IS DESERTED BY HIS WIFE—PUBLISHES HIS DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF DIVORCE—EFFECT OF THE EXISTING LAWS ON PERSONAL RELIGION—THEIR BEARING ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY—PUBLICATION OF THE JUDGMENT OF MARTIN BUCER CONCERNING DIVORCE—THE TETRACHORDON—THE COLASTERION.

IN the summer of 1643, occurred one of the few known events in Milton's private life. We are informed by Philips, his nephew and first biographer, that about Whitsuntide he took a journey into the country, which no one about him supposed to have any other object than that of recreation. After a month's absence, however, he returned with a wife, having married Mary Powell, the daughter of a gentleman residing at Forest Hill, near Shotover, in Oxfordshire, who held the commission of the peace. No information that has descended to us throws any light upon this extraordinary connexion. Not only were the Powells heartily attached to the cause of Charles I., but their general habits were as inconsistent with the notions of Milton as their political bias was with his principles; for it would appear, from the brief accounts we have of them, that they indulged in all the gay festivity common among the cavaliers of that day. So ill-assorted a union was not likely to be productive of much happiness to either party. It is probable that the studious and religious habits of her husband were distasteful to the bride, and perhaps the general character of his household was not less so. Having taken a larger

and more commodious house in a court leading from Aldersgate-street, he consented to receive into his household some other pupils, in addition to his nephews. His aged father, also, who, until the spring of 1643, had resided with his younger son at Reading, had, on the taking of that town by the Earl of Essex, come to reside with the poet, in the enjoyment of whose affectionate attentions he spent the remaining four years of his life.

Whatever may have been the causes of the young wife's distaste, it is certain that at the expiration of one month from her entering on her new establishment, she obtained his permission to spend the remainder of the summer at her father's house. This voluntary separation of herself from her husband so soon after her marriage, is a sufficient proof of her unfitness for, and probably her unworthiness of, such a union. But though her leave of absence extended only to Michaelmas, there seems little reason to doubt that from the first she contemplated nothing less than the final desertion of her husband. At the expiration of the time limited for her absence, Milton wrote to remind her of her engagement, but to this, as to several other subsequent letters to the same purpose, she never replied. The temporary ascendancy of the monarch's fortunes, by his victories at Atherston Moor and Lansdowne, had revived the hopes of his adherents, and probably furnished motives to the Powell family for repudiating the connexion of one of its members with so eminent a champion of the Parliamentary party; and the consequence was the contemptuous dismissal of a messenger whom Milton had sent to accompany his wife to her proper home. This outrage upon the natural claims and the just authority of a husband, at once wounded and incensed the mind of Milton, who, instead of the conjugal happiness he had anticipated, found himself left "with nothing belonging to matrimony but its chain." These circumstances induced the injured husband to contemplate the *ultima ratio* of a divorce; and in order to vindicate his

reputation in so doubtful a matter, and, perhaps, with a view to gain the approval of the legislature, he published, in 1644, two editions (one anonymously, and one with his name) of a treatise entitled "The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce." This he inscribed, with a stately address, to the Parliament of his country.

The "Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce" is probably, of all the prose writings of Milton, the least known, and the least likely to obtain a future popularity. Yet, as a composition, it is one of the most remarkable that we possess from his pen. The subject must be to most men unattractive and painful, and under the social regulations of this country, and this age, it is to be hoped that comparatively few would be led to peruse it by any more earnest motives than those which spring from their literary tastes. It evinces the profoundest mastery of the question, the most learned research, a majestic power of diction and illustration, and (if I may use the expression) a most spiritual appreciation of that delicate passion which sanctifies the bond of marriage.*

In my notice of this and three succeeding treatises, I shall so far desert the general scheme of this biography, as to refrain from reproducing his extended arguments in the form of analysis, and shall only present a few passages which will convey an idea of the pervading tone and tenour of the composition.

* Mr. St. John, the latest editor of Milton's prose works, commits himself to a judgment on this subject, in the following words:—

"These works on Divorce are full of beauty—of poetical descriptions of love—of philosophical investigations—of original ideas and images. The whole is pervaded and adorned by an enthusiastic spirit of poetry, which constitutes in him the vitality of style. All, therefore, who can tolerate a little quaintness and plain speaking, and who are not averse from being taught by a somewhat dogmatic instructor, can read with pleasure Milton's speculations on divorce, which are full of sound wisdom, which may serve to enlighten both our legislators and philosophers, if they will be modest enough to listen and learn."

His main thesis is thus laid down:—“To remove, therefore, if possible, this great and sad oppression, which through the strictness of a literal interpreting hath invaded and disturbed the dearest and most peaceable estate of household society, to the overburdening, if not the overwhelming, of many Christians better worth than to be so deserted of the Church’s considerate care, this position shall be laid down, first proving, then answering, what may be objected either from Scripture or light of reason.

“That indisposition, unfitness, or contrariety of mind, arising from a cause in nature unchangeable, hindering, and ever likely to hinder, the main benefits of conjugal society, which are solace and peace ; is a greater reason of divorce than natural frigidity, especially if there be no children, and that there be mutual consent.”

Aware that his arguments were destined to encounter much opposition and prejudice, he thus seeks to conciliate the unbiased attention of his readers:—“It shall be here sought by due ways to be made appear, that those words of God in the institution, promising a meet help against loneliness, and those words of Christ, that ‘his yoke is easy, and his burden light,’ were not spoken in vain: for if the knot of marriage may in no case be dissolved but for adultery, all the burdens and services of the law are not so intolerable. This only is desired of them who are minded to judge hardly of thus maintaining, that they would be still, and hear all out, nor think it equal to answer deliberate reason with sudden heat and noise ; remembering this, that many truths now of reverend esteem and credit, had their birth and beginning once from singular and private thoughts, while the most of men were otherwise possessed ; and had the fate at first to be generally exploded and exclaimed on by many violent opposers: yet I may err, perhaps, in soothing myself, that this present truth revived will deserve on all hands to be not sinisterly received, in that it undertakes the cure of an inveterate disease crept

into the best part of human society; and to do this with no smarting corrosive, but a smooth and pleasing lesson, which received both the virtue to soften and dispel rooted and knotty sorrows, and without enchantment, if that be feared, or spell used, hath regard at once both to serious piety and upright honesty; that tends to the redeeming and restoring of none but such as are the object of compassion, having in an ill hour hampered themselves, to the utter dispatch of all their most beloved comforts and repose for this life's term. But if we shall obstinately dislike this new overture of unexpected ease and recovery, what remains but to deplore the frowardness of our hopeless condition, which neither can endure the estate we are in, nor admit of remedy either sharp or sweet? Sharp we ourselves distaste; and sweet, under whose hands we are, is scrupled and suspected as too luscious. In such a posture Christ found the Jews, who were neither won with the austerity of John the Baptist, and thought it too much licence to follow freely the charming pipe of him who sounded and proclaimed liberty and relief to all distresses: yet truth in some age or other will find her witness, and shall be justified at last by her own children."

With reference to the effect of the existing system upon personal religion, he has the following observations:—"As those priests of old were not to be long in sorrow, or if they were, they could not rightly execute their function; so every true Christian in a higher order of priesthood, is a person dedicate to joy and peace, offering himself a lively sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and there is no Christian duty that is not to be seasoned and set off with cheerishness; which in a thousand outward and intermitting crosses may yet be done well, as in this vale of tears: but in such a bosom affliction as this, crushing the very foundation of his inmost nature, when he shall be forced to love against a possibility, and to use a dissimulation against his soul in the perpetual and ceaseless duties of a husband;

doubtless his whole duty of serving God must needs be blurred and tainted with a sad unpreparedness and dejection of spirit, wherein God has no delight. Who sees not, therefore, how much more Christianity it would be to break by divorce that which is more broken by undue and forcible keeping, rather than ‘to cover the altar of the Lord with continual tears, so that he regardeth not the offering any more,’ rather than that the whole worship of a Christian man’s life should languish and fade away beneath the weight of an immeasurable grief and discouragement?”

“Nothing more than disturbance of mind suspends us from approaching to God; such a disturbance especially, as both assaults our faith and trust in God’s providence, and ends, if there be not a miracle of virtue on either side, not only in bitterness and wrath, the canker of devotion, but in a desperate and vicious carelessness, when he sees himself, without fault of his, trained by a deceitful bait into a snare of misery, betrayed by an alluring ordinance, and then made the thrall of heaviness and discomfort by an undivorcing law of God, as he erroneously thinks, but of man’s iniquity, as the truth is; for that God prefers the free and cheerful worship of a Christian, before the grievance and exacted observance of an unhappy marriage, besides that the general maxims of religion assure us, will be more manifest by drawing a parallel argument from the ground of divorcing an idolatress, which was, lest he should alienate his heart from the true worship of God: and, what difference is there whether she pervert him to superstition by her enticing sorcery, or disenable him in the whole service of God through the disturbance of her unhelpful and unfit society; and so drive him at last, through murmuring and despair, to thoughts of atheism? Neither doth it lessen the cause of separating, in that the one willingly allures him from the faith, the other perhaps unwillingly drives him; for in the account of God it comes all to one, that the wife loses him a servant: and therefore, by all the united force of

the Decalogue, she ought to be disbanded, unless we must set marriage above God and charity, which is the doctrine of devils, no less than forbidding to marry."

In the following passage he applies to this subject his views of Christian liberty:—

"And, indeed, the papists, who are the strictest forbidders of divorce, are the easiest libertines to admit of grossest uncleanness; as if they had a design by making wedlock a supportless yoke, to violate it most, under colour of preserving it most inviolable; and withal delighting (as their mystery is) to make men the day labourers of their own afflictions, as if there were such a scarcity of miseries from abroad, that we should be made to melt our choicest home blessings, and coin them into crosses, for want whereby to hold commerce with patience. If any, therefore, who shall hap to read this discourse, hath been through misadventure ill engaged in this contracted evil here complained of, and finds the fits and workings of a high impatience frequently upon him; of all those wild words which men in misery think to ease themselves by uttering, let him not open his lips against the providence of Heaven,* or tax the ways of God and his divine truth; for they are equal, easy, and not burdensome; nor do they ever cross the just and reasonable desires of men, nor involve this our portion of mortal life into a necessity of sadness and malcontent, by laws commanding over the unreduceable antipathies of nature, sooner or later found, but allow us to remedy and shake off those evils into which human error hath led us through the

* In this eloquent passage we discover the same train of thought which occurs in the opening passage of the "Paradise Lost:"—

"What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raise and support:
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."

midst of our best intentions, and to support our incident extremities by that authentic precept of sovereign charity, whose grand commission is to do and to dispose over all the ordinances of God to man, that love and truth may advance each other to everlasting. While we, literally superstitious, through customary faintness of heart, not venturing to pierce with our free thoughts into the full latitude of nature and religion, abandon ourselves to serve under the tyranny of usurped opinions ; suffering those ordinances which were allotted to our solace and reviving, to trample over us, and hale us into a multitude of sorrows, which God never meant us. And where he sets us in a fair allowance of way, with honest liberty and prudence to our guard, we never leave subtilizing and casuisting till we have straitened and pared that liberal path into a razor's edge to walk on ; between a precipice of unnecessary mischief on either side, and starting at every false alarm, we do not know which way to set a foot forward with manly confidence and Christian resolution, through the confused ringing in our ears of panic scruples and amazements.”*

He concludes the treatise with the following passage :—
 “Let not, therefore, the frailty of man go on thus inventing needless troubles to itself, to groan under the false imagination of a strictness never imposed from above ; enjoining that for duty which is an impossible and vain supererogating. ‘Be not righteous overmuch,’ is the counsel of Ecclesiastes ; ‘why shouldst thou destroy thyself?’ Let us not be thus over-curious to strain at atoms, and yet to stop every vent and cranny of permissive liberty, lest nature, wanting those needful pores and breathing-places, which God hath not debarred our weakness, either suddenly break out into some wide rupture of open vice and frantic heresy, or else inwardly fester with repining and blasphemous thoughts, under an unreasonable and fruitless rigour of unwarranted law. Against which evils nothing can more

* Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 262, 263.

beseem the religion of the church, or the wisdom of the state, than to consider timely and provide. And in so doing let them not doubt but they shall vindicate the misreputed honour of God and his great Lawgiver, by suffering him to give his own laws according to the condition of man's nature best known to him, without the unsufferable imputation of dispensing legally with many ages of ratified adultery. They shall recover the misattended words of Christ to the sincerity of their true sense from manifold contradictions, and shall open them with the key of charity. Many helpless Christians they shall raise from the depths of sadness and distress, utterly unfitted as they are to serve God or man: many they shall reclaim from obscure and giddy sects, many regain from dissolute and brutish licence, many from desperate hardness, if ever they were justly pleaded. They shall set free many daughters of Israel not wanting much of her sad plight whom 'Satan had bound eighteen years.' Man they shall restore to his just dignity and prerogative in nature, preferring the soul's free peace before the promiscuous draining of a carnal rage. Marriage, from a perilous hazard and snare, they shall reduce to be a more certain haven and retirement of happy society; when they shall judge according to God and Moses, (and how not then according to Christ,) when they shall judge it more wisdom and goodness to break that covenant seemingly, and keep it really, than by compulsion of law to keep it seemingly, and by compulsion of blameless nature to break it really, at least if it were ever truly joined. The vigour of discipline they may then turn with better success upon the prostitute looseness of the times, when men, finding in themselves the infirmities of former ages, shall be constrained above the gift of God in them to unprofitable and impossible observances, never required from the civilest, the wisest, the holiest nations, whose other excellencies in moral virtue they never yet could equal. Last of all, to those whose mind is still to maintain textual restrictions, whereof the

bare sound cannot consist sometimes with humanity; much less with charity; I would ever answer by putting them in remembrance of a command above all commands, which they seem to have forgot, and who spake it: in comparison whereof, this which they so exalt is but a petty and subordinate precept. 'Let them go,' therefore, with whom I am loathe to couple them, yet they will needs run into the same blindness with the pharisees; 'let them go therefore,' and consider well what this lesson means, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice:' for on that 'saying all the law and prophets depend;' much more the gospel, whose end and excellence is mercy and peace. Or if they cannot learn that, how will they hear this? which yet I shall not doubt to leave with them as a conclusion, that God the Son hath put all other things under his own feet, but his commandments he hath left all under the feet of charity."*

Shortly after the publication of this treatise, Milton followed it with another, which was also addressed to the Parliament, and entitled, "The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce." This consists of an analysis and translation of Bucer's Second Book "Of the Kingdom of Christ," addressed to Edward VI., to which Milton prefixes the testimonies of Calvin, Beza, and other eminent men to Bucer's learning and piety, and especially to his diligence in the exposition of Scripture.†

* Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 272, 273.

† Bucer was born near Strasburg, in 1491, and educated at Heidelberg, having entered the order of St. Dominick. The change of opinion which determined the tenor of his life was occasioned by reading some writings of Erasmus and Luther, and he adopted the views of the latter in 1521, in accordance with which he taught divinity for twenty years at Strasburg. At the Diet of Augsburg, he vehemently opposed the system of doctrine called the *interim*, inviously drawn up by Charles V. for the temporary regulation of religious faith in Germany, until a free General Council could be held. This course exposed him to so much difficulty and danger that he accepted an invitation from Cranmer to settle in England, where he was appointed to teach theology at Cambridge. King Edward the Sixth having heard that Bucer's health suffered for want of a German

In the following year, 1645, Milton published two other tracts on Divorce; the one entitled "Tetrachordon," which was an exposition of the four passages of Scripture* which are supposed most distinctly to affirm the views which Milton opposed; and the other, "Colasterion," † a severe reply to an anonymous antagonist. This latter tract closed the controversy. Of the sincerity with which Milton held his opinions on marriage and divorce no one can entertain a doubt, any more than of the astonishing ability and learning with which he supported them. On the vexed question itself there ever have been, and probably ever will be, differences of opinion among virtuous men, which it is not part of the design of these pages to attempt to reconcile.

stove, sent him £20 to procure one. In return for this attention he wrote the work entitled "Of the Kingdom of Christ," for the King's own use. Bucer died at Cambridge early in the year 1550, and was buried in St. Mary's with great honour; but five years after, when inquisitors were sent by Mary to Cambridge, his remains were exhumed, and ignominiously burned in the Market-place.

* These are, Gen. i 27, 28; Deut. xxiv. 1, 2; Matt. v. 31, 32, and 1. Cor. vii. 13, 16.

† The Greek word for a castigation.

CHAPTER VIII.

STATE OF RELIGIOUS PARTIES IN ENGLAND—PERSECUTIONS BY LAUD AND THE COURTS OF HIGH COMMISSION AND STAR CHAMBER—PERSECUTING BIGOTRY OF THE PRESBYTERIANS — MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY—THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT—CATASTROPHE OF THE ROYAL CAUSE — REPENTANCE AND RETURN OF MILTON'S WIFE—HE PUBLISHES HIS TREATISE ON EDUCATION—ANALYSIS OF THE WORK.

BEFORE detailing the effects produced by the publication of the Treatises on Divorce, and the bearing they had upon Milton's subsequent career, it is necessary to notice the state of parties, and especially of ecclesiastical parties, at this period. While the secularity and corruption of the clergy had brought the Anglican church into contempt, the tyrannical cruelty of the bishops had excited against it the bitterest feelings of hostility. An attempt was made by the House of Commons, in the first parliament of Charles I., which met June 18, 1625, to abridge the causes of this odium, by restoring those of the clergy who had been silenced as Puritans, and moderating non-residences, pluralities, and commendams. This effort was rendered abortive by the abrupt dissolution of Parliament, after an existence of less than two months. Two years afterwards, this spirit of dissatisfaction was greatly increased by the publication of a Sermon, at the special command of the king, under the title of "Religion and Allegiance," by Dr. Manwaring. In this discourse the preacher maintained, "That the

king is not bound to observe the laws of the realm, concerning the subjects' rights and liberties; but that his royal will and command, in imposing loans and taxes, without common consent, in parliament, doth oblige the subjects' conscience upon pain of eternal damnation." The Commons, in their indignation, indicated how little they understood the principles of true liberty, by visiting the offender with a sentence, a fine, imprisonment, and suspension, and the breach between the king and his Parliament was much widened by his not only releasing and pardoning his parasite, but by rewarding him with the gift of a living in Essex, in addition to that of St. Giles's in the Fields, which he already held.

Meanwhile the power and malignity of Laud increased together; and the absolute devastation committed by the two unconstitutional courts—those of the High Commission and the Star Chamber—rivalled the atrocities of the Popish Inquisition. Multitudes of Dissenters were driven to emigrate to what were then the wilds of the North American continent, many of whom perished there by famine. Numerous petitions were now presented for the abolition of the obnoxious courts, and of episcopacy itself, which was scarcely less detested. The second expedition against the Scotch, popularly called the bishops' war, in 1640, met with the ill success which it deserved; it was closed by the humiliating treaty of Rippon, and the 3rd of November in that year witnessed the memorable meeting of the Long Parliament. In this, the petitions setting forth the corruptions and praying for the abolition of the episcopacy, were redoubled. One of these was signed by fifteen thousand citizens of London, and another, known as the ministers' petition, signed by seven hundred clergymen. These were met by counter petitions, procured by the influence of the aristocracy and the bishops, to which no fewer than one hundred thousand names are said to have been attached. A resolution passed the House of Commons, "That the legislative

and judicial power of bishops in the House of Peers, in parliament, is a great hinderance to the discharge of their spiritual functions, prejudicial to the commonwealth, and fit to be taken away by bill." On the following day a similar vote was passed respecting their being in the commission of the peace, or having any judicial power in the Star Chamber, or in any civil court, and, on the 26th of the same month, their employment as privy counsellors, or in any other temporal offices, was also condemned." *

On this resolution a bill was founded, the object of which was to exclude the bishops from the legislature, and to disqualify them from all administrative offices of a similar kind. After encountering a strong opposition in the House of Lords, it was met by four resolutions, the purpose of which was, to exclude the clergy from the Star Chamber, the Privy Council, and other secular offices, but to continue to them their privilege of sitting in the Upper House; the Commons objected to this exception, and the bill was ultimately lost. A second and more sweeping measure was within a few days brought under the consideration of the House of Commons; it contemplated no less than "the utter abolishing and taking away of all archbishops, bishops, their chancellors and commissaries; deans, deans and chapters; archdeacons, prebendaries, chanters, canons, and all other their under officers." Political events, however, interposed delays, which led to the abandonment of this measure, though the spirit by which it was dictated remained unimpaired.

Next followed an impeachment, in the name of the Commons, of thirteen of the bishops, for having made and promulgated, in the convocation of 1640, divers canons, hostile "to the King's prerogative, to the fundamental laws and statutes of the realm, to the rights of Parliament, and to the property and liberty of the subject." But here again

* Dr. Price's *History of Protestant Nonconformity*, vol. ii. p. 178.

the supporters of episcopacy adopted the victorious policy of delay, and at once balked and exasperated the resolves of the people.

Meanwhile the controversial writings of Milton, which have already been noticed, had produced a marked effect upon the parliament and the country; and in so far as they argumentatively demolished episcopacy, they had been hailed with delight by the Presbyterians, both Scotch and English, whose repugnance to that form of church government had been confirmed and intensified, in the one case by the outrages which had been committed on a religion intertwined with the deepest sentiments of nationality; and in the other, by those almost vindictive feelings which persecution engenders, and which piety itself has seldom prevailed to control.

Unhappily for the cause of religious freedom in this and, perhaps, in every subsequent age, the bitter aversion of the Presbyterians to episcopacy was unconnected with any enlarged love of religious freedom, and extended with sectarian acrimony to Christians of every communion but their own. The prevalent sentiments of that denomination shall be described in the language of Dr. Price; and in quoting it, I take the opportunity of saying that his history of Protestant Nonconformity, by its great research, its judicious discrimination, the enlightened views which it exhibits, and the expansive candour and catholicity of sentiment which pervades it, commends itself as by far the most valuable work we possess in this department of ecclesiastical literature. "The Scotch," the Doctor observes, "were bigotedly devoted to the Presbyterian form of ecclesiastical government. It had been erected on the ruins of Popery by Knox, the most fearless and masculine of modern reformers, and had been endeared to the nation by the fearful struggle which they made on its behalf. What James had contemplated, Charles commissioned Laud to achieve; and the disciples of Presbytery groaned beneath

his heartless policy. The sufferings inflicted in the cause of episcopacy naturally engendered an unconquerable aversion to it. The people loathed it as a disguised and virulent form of Popery, and at length wrested from the reluctant hand of Charles the recognition of their beloved and more simple polity. Unhappily, however, the Presbyterians of Scotland had not learned wisdom from their sufferings. Their passions were inflamed without their views being rectified; and they came forth from the school of adversity as narrow-minded and intolerant as any of the bishops. Hence arose a great difficulty in the negociations of the Parliament with their brethren in Scotland."

The latter insisted on the ecclesiastical government of England being conformed to their own platform, and required the enforcement of penal laws against all Dissenters. The General Assembly, in a communication to the English Parliament, after referring to the request of the Scotch commissioners, in the late treaty for peace, "That in all His Majesty's dominions there might be one confession of faith, one directory of worship, one public catechism, and one form of church government;" and that, "the names of heresies and sects, puritans, conformists, separatists, anabaptists, &c., which do rend asunder the bowels both of kirk and kingdom," might be suppressed, proceeded to declare that they are encouraged to renew the proposition made by the forenamed commissioners, for beginning the work of reformation at the uniformity of kirk government. "For what hope," say they, "can there be of unity in religion, of one confession of faith, one form of worship, and one catechism, till there be first one form of ecclesiastical government: yea, what hope can the Kingdom and Kirk of Scotland have of a firm and durable peace, till the prelacy, which hath been the main cause of their miseries and troubles, first and last, be plucked up, root and branch, as a plant which God hath not planted, and from which no better fruit can be expected, than such sour grapes as this

day set on edge the kingdom of England? The prelatical hierarchy being put out of the way, the work will be easy, without forcing any conscience, to settle in England the government of the reformed kirks of assemblies."

In conformity with an agreement made between the Parliament and the Scotch Presbyterians, the memorable Westminster Assembly was convened in the summer of 1643. In this the Presbyterians were predominant, alike in numbers and in parliamentary and popular influence, and the intolerance of their proceedings was such, as to convince all true lovers of freedom that their ascendancy, in place of the episcopal hierarchy, would be not an emancipation, but a change of yokes and taskmasters. "They aimed," says Dr. Price, "at power rather than at liberty; and in resisting the encroachments of the hierarchy, sought to establish that of the kirk. Could they have effected their object, an iron-hearted uniformity would have been imposed on the nation. The rites of religion would have been enforced with minute scrupulosity; but its generous impulses and voluntary movements would have been wholly crushed. Baxter was not insensible to this defect, and he has portrayed it with a fidelity which gives the greater weight to his approving testimony. Happily for the interests of religion, there was another party in the assembly, the members of which added to the personal virtues and ministerial diligence of the presbyterians more expansive views and a more liberal creed. They were known by the name of Independents, and had for some time a very arduous and perplexing duty to perform. Their numbers were at first so limited, as to present but little ground to hope that they would be able successfully to resist the scheme of the presbyterians; but what they wanted in numerical strength was supplied by the consummate skill and ability of their leaders."*

It was during the session of the Westminster Assembly, thus composed, whose proceedings were characterized by

+ History of Protestant Nonconformity, p. 254.

“extremes of folly and wisdom, of enlightened discussion and of narrow-minded bigotry,” that the success of the royal arms compelled the parliamentary leaders to seek the support of the Scotch, who regarded the civil war as a religious struggle. The result of the negotiation between the parliamentary leaders and the Scottish presbyterians was the instrument, commonly known as the Solemn League and Covenant, a master-piece of spiritual despotism, which, after having been subscribed by the Parliament and the Westminster Assembly, was ordered to be enforced upon the whole community, lay and clerical, civil and military, and the names of all recusants to be returned to the government.

To complete the intolerance of the presbyterian party, dominant alike in the assembly and the parliament, the new directory, as it was called, was issued under the sanction of both those bodies. The object of this despotic measure was, to suppress the Book of Common Prayer, and to enforce that perfect uniformity of religious observance and worship, at which the presbyterians both in England and Scotland had so long been aiming. The temper in which the directory was enforced may be judged of by the orders issued in August, 1645.* In dismissing this humiliating portion of our history, I anticipate the course of events to indicate that point at which, when any despotic power arrives, it “o’erleaps itself,” and hastens to its downfall. I refer to the parliamentary ordinance passed on the 2nd of May, 1648, through the influence of the presbyterians, against blasphemy and heresy. It enacted, that all persons who, “by preaching, teaching, printing, or writing,” denied the existence or attributes of God, the deity of the Son or Holy Spirit, the existence of two natures in Christ, the efficacy of his atonement, the canonical authority of the books of the Old and New Testament, the resurrection of the body, or the certainty of a future judgment, should, upon conviction, if the error were not abjured, “*suffer the pains of death, as in the case of felony, without benefit of the clergy.*”

* See Dr. Price’s Hist. of Prot. Nonconformity, vol. ii. p. 338, *et al.*

Such were the position and temper of the presbyterians of Great Britain, at a crisis in the history of the Church, when a right appreciation of the principles of religious freedom, and a pervading spirit of Christian candour and love, would have secured to this empire the lasting and blessed heritage of liberty of conscience and perfect ecclesiastical equality. Universal history, perhaps, does not record a more lamentable loss of a more precious opportunity.

It is easy to imagine what kind of reception would be given, by a class whose ambitious bigotry sought to bend the souls of all their fellow-subjects to a uniform compliance with their creed and ritual, to such novel doctrines as those of Milton on the subject of marriage and divorce. His treatise kindled a perfect fury of opposition among the clergy and leaders of the presbyterian party. Forgetful of the services for which they were indebted to Milton, in their struggle against episcopal oppression, they assailed him with rabid animosity from the pulpit and the press; and, as if to challenge the severest inflictions of that power under which they had themselves been made to smart, they even caused him to be summoned before the House of Lords. From this tribunal he retired unharmed, leaving to his opponents the shame of defeat in addition to the guilt of persecution.

Confident in the justice of the views laid down in the dissertation last noticed, Milton resolved again to enter into the marriage state, and is even said to have made proposals to a young lady, the daughter of a Dr. Davis. His addresses do not appear to have been favourably received at first, and before they could be prosecuted to a successful issue, they were interrupted by an unexpected occurrence. The royal cause had met with its fatal disaster on Naseby field, and the known adherents of Charles were consequently placed in a precarious and alarming position. Among these were the family of Milton's wife, who now, says Dr. Symmons, became "sensible of the folly of their conduct, and solicitous to propitiate the resentment of an

injured husband, whose assistance might now probably be immediately requisite for their protection or subsistence. The plan for the accomplishment of their purposes was conceived and executed with successful ingenuity. Combining with his friends, who concurred in the wish for a reconciliation between the pair who had been united at the altar, they watched our author's visits, and, as he was in the house of a relation, they stationed his wife in an inner apartment, with instructions to appear at the proper time, and to supplicate for his pardon upon her knees. Faithful to the lesson of her friends, she sustained her part with skill, and probably with feeling. The scene was surprising, and the resistance of Milton, which seemed firm only for a moment, fell before its weighty effect. Yielding to the entreaties of beauty, and perhaps also to the recurrence of love, what he appeared to concede only to the solicitations of his friends, and dismissing every irritating recollection from his bosom, he re-admitted the wife who had deserted and insulted him into the full possession of his affections. Not satisfied with this signal triumph over his resentment, he extended his placability to those who were the abettors, if not the instigators, of her offence; and, receiving her parents and family under his roof, he protected and maintained them in this hour of their danger and distress. If his interest with the victorious party was unable to obtain complete immunity for his royalist connexions, it availed to save them from ruin, and to preserve the bulk of a property from which he was destined to receive not even the stipulated fortune of his wife. Conduct of so high a character, the offspring of a large and feeling heart, is above the ornament of any laboured panegyric. Let the facts, in the intercourse of Milton with the Powells, be placed distinctly, and at once in our view, and nothing but atrocious prejudice can withhold us from admiring the magnanimity of the former, and from despising, while we pity, the meanness of the latter."*

* Symmons's Life of Milton, pp. 176, 178.

Finding that his house in Aldersgate-street was too small for his establishment, which was now increased by the return of his wife, he hired a more spacious residence in Barbican.* Even this soon proved not too large for his requirements; for, not only did his wife's parents seek an asylum under his roof, but also a numerous train of brothers and sisters, all of whom continued with him until after his father's death, which occurred in 1647, when the family property was restored to them by an arrangement with the Government. It is a striking proof of the irrepressible activity of Milton's mind, that, amidst the public convulsions and domestic anxiety of the time, he could find either leisure or inclination for the literary pursuits in which he engaged. Yet it was in the year 1644, that he produced his "Treatise on Education," as well as the greatest of all his productions in prose, entitled, "Areopagitica, a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Speaking."

The treatise on education was addressed to his friend, Master Samuel Hartlib, and was occasioned by Milton's conviction, and, indeed, his experience of the cramped, barbarous, and almost useless style of education which then prevailed in our public schools and universities, and which, even in our own day, is but slowly and reluctantly retiring before the march of enlightened reform. It has been variously commented upon by the biographers of Milton. Dr. Symmons describes it "as calculated only to amuse the fancy, while it would be found by experience to disappoint the expectation." Mr. Milford, however, takes a different view. "The system of education which he adopted

* "I cannot but remark," says Dr. Johnson, "a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers; every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence." Indeed it is known that foreigners of distinction gratified their curiosity, during the life of Milton, by visiting the house in Bread-street where he was born.

was deep and comprehensive ; it promised to teach science with language, or rather to make the study of languages subservient to the acquisition of scientific knowledge. Dr. Johnson has severely censured this method of instruction, but with arguments that might successfully be met. The plan recommended by the authority of Milton seems to be chiefly liable to objection from being too extensive." .

Milton commences by stating his own views of the great purpose of education, and of the inadequacy of existing institutions to fulfil it. "The end then of learning," he says, "is to repair the ruins of our first parents, by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection. But because our understanding cannot in this body found itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible, as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be followed in all discreet teaching. And seeing every nation affords not experience and tradition enough for all kinds of learning, therefore we are chiefly taught the languages of those people who have at any time been most industrious after wisdom ; so that language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known. And though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet, if he have not studied the solid things in them, as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man, as any yeoman or tradesman competently wise in his mother dialect only.

"Hence appear the many mistakes which have made learning generally so unpleasing and so unsuccessful. First, we do amiss to spend seven or eight years merely in scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek, as might

be learned otherwise easily and delightfully in one year.* And that which casts our proficiency therein so much behind, is our time lost partly in too oft idle vacancies given both to schools and universities; partly in a preposterous exaction, forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations, which are the acts of ripest judgment, and the final work of a head filled, by long reading and observing, with elegant maxims and copious invention. These are not matters to be wrung from poor stripplings, like blood out of the nose, or the plucking of untimely fruit. * * * *

“And for the usual method of teaching arts, I deem it to be an old error of universities, not yet well recovered from the scholastic grossness of barbarous ages, that instead of beginning with arts most easy, (and those be such as are most obvious to the sense,) they present their young unmatriculated novices, at first coming, with the most intellective abstractions of logic and metaphysics; so that they, having but newly left those grammatic flats and shallows, where they stuck unreasonably to learn a few words with lamentable construction, and now on the sudden transported under another climate, to be tossed and turmoiled with their unbalanced wits in fathomless and unquiet deeps of controversy, do for the most part grow into hatred and contempt of learning, mocked and deluded all this while with ragged notions and babblement, while they expected worthy and delightful knowledge.”†

Having thus indicated the main defects of university education, Milton thus enters on the development of his projected reforms. “I shall detain you now no longer in the demonstration of what we should not do, but straight conduct you to a hill-side, where I will point you out the right path of a virtuous and noble education; laborious indeed at

* On this subject, see Locke's *Treatise on Education*, § 162—177. *Works, folio edition*, vol. iii. p. 72, *seq.*

† *Prose Works*, vol. iii. pp. 464, 466.

the first ascent, but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospect, and melodious sounds on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming.* I doubt not but ye shall have more ado to drive our dullest and laziest youth, our stocks and stubs, from the infinite desire of such a happy nurture, than we have now to hale and drag our choicest and hopefullest wits to that asinine feast of sow-thistles and brambles, which is commonly set before them as all the food and entertainment of their tenderest and most docible age. I call, therefore, a complete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war. And how all this may be done between twelve and one and twenty, less time than is now bestowed in pure trifling at grammar and sophistry, is to be thus ordered.”†

It is not surprising that Milton's plan should have been condemned as too extensive to be practicable, for it embraces nearly every branch of human knowledge. Commencing with grammar, it leads the student through the Latin classics, beginning with those which convey some kind of scientific or economical knowledge; at the same time acquiring the knowledge of the “principles of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and geography, with a general compact of physics, they may descend in mathematics to the instrumental science of trigonometry, and from thence to fortification, architecture, enginery, or navigation. And in natural philosophy they may proceed leisurely from the history of meteors, minerals, plants, and living creatures, as far as anatomy.” He continues his plan through the art of

* He had already, in *Comus*, described the delight derivable from the study of philosophy:

“How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.”

† *Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 467.

medicine, and natural science generally, and those Latin poets who especially treat on similar subjects, and last come the highest departments of study,—ethics, politics, theology, and logic. This he connects throughout with a system of physical and military training, recommending as a principal relaxation, “the solemn and divine harmonies of music.” In concluding his treatise, he himself seems to have been struck, on a retrospect, with the almost presumptuous vastness of his scheme. “I believe,” he says, “that this is not a bow for every man to shoot in, that counts himself a teacher; but will require sinews almost equal to those which Homer gave Ulysses; yet I am withal persuaded that it may prove much more easy in the assay, than it now seems at distance, and much more illustrious.”

CHAPTER IX.

MILTON PUBLISHES HIS "SPEECH FOR THE LIBERTY OF UNLICENSED PRINTING"—ANALYSIS OF THE WORK—NOBLE PASSAGES OCCURRING IN IT—DISCHARGE OF MABBOT, THE LICENSER, AT HIS OWN REQUEST.

THE intolerance of the presbyterians, armed with the powers of a parliamentary majority, was now mimicking the most despotic acts of the prelacy: they attempted the forcible suppression of all opinions, political and religious, but their own, and even essayed the impossible task of damming up the great channel of mental communication by holding the press in control. Milton's enlightened mind was not slow to perceive that this course involved a fatuity analogous to that of the Eastern despot who lashed the waves, and threw fetters into the rebellious ocean. He further saw that the sufferings which this penal system inflicted on individuals were not to be compared with the evils of intellectual stagnation, political decay, and moral death which it shed on nations. To these sentiments we owe the masterpiece of Milton,—the "Address to the Parliament in favour of the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing," of which, in accordance with the plan of this volume, an analysis is now to be presented.

He commences with a stately eulogy upon the Parliament; he addresses himself to the recent order for the

regulation of printing: "That no book, pamphlet, or paper shall be henceforth printed, unless the same be first approved and licensed by such, or at least one of such, as shall be thereto appointed." He proposes first to show them, that this originated from a party with whom they would not willingly be identified; secondly, that it would be powerless for the suppression of scandalous, seditious, and libellous books; and lastly that it would operate for the discouragement of all learning, and the effectual obstruction of national progress in every department of knowledge both secular and sacred.

But while advocating the liberty of the press, Milton wisely guarded himself from approving an unseemly and dangerous license. "I deny not," he says, "but that it is of greatest concernment in the church and commonwealth, to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors; for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive, as those fabulous dragon's teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book: who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. It is true, no age can restore a life, whereof, perhaps, there is no great loss; and revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth, for the want of which whole nations fare the worse. We should be wary,

therefore, what persecutions we raise against the living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man, preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom; and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at the ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself; and slays an immortality rather than a life."*

Milton next presents an historical sketch of the restrictions which from the earliest ages of literature had been laid upon books. He shows that in Athens, these were confined to writings of a blasphemous or libellous character; that in Sparta no such control was exercised; that in ancient Rome an almost entire freedom was allowed during the commonwealth. He states, however, that libels were burnt, and the makers punished by Augustus, and adds, "The like severity, no doubt, was used, if aught were impiously written against their esteemed gods. Except in these two points, how the world went in books, the magistrate kept no reckoning."†

* Prose Works, vol. ii., p. 55.

† Milton would appear in this instance to have forgotten the suppression of the licentious chorus in the Greek Drama thus mentioned by Horace:—

"Successit vetus his Comœdia, non sine multâ
Laude; sed in vitium libertas excidit, et vim
Dignam lege regi. Lex est accepta, chorusque
Turpitur obticuit, sublato jure nocendi."—

Epist. ad Pis. ver. 281—284.

The testimony of Tacitus also, widely differs from Milton's statement touching the restraints on the expression of opinion, whether oral or written, during the earlier period of the Roman empire. In his exquisite biography of Agricola, he says:—"Legimus, cum Aruleno Rustico Paetus Thrasea, Herennio Senecioni Priscus Helvidius laudati essent, capitale fuisse: neque in ipsos modo auctores, sed in libros quoque eorum saevitum, delegato triumviris ministerio, ut monumenta clarissimorum ingeniorum in comitio ac foro urerentur. Scilicet illo igne vocem Populi Romani et libertatem Senatûs et

He next shows that the restrictions under the Christian emperors were no more severe, and indeed that the fetters reformed by the parliamentary ordinance were not imposed upon the intellect and conscience of men, until after the year 800. "After which time," he says, "the popes of Rome, engrossing what they pleased of political rule into their own hands, extended their dominion over men's eyes, as they had before over their judgments, burning and prohibiting to be read what they fancied not; yet sparing in their censures, and the books not many which they so dealt with; till Martin the Fifth, by his bull, not only prohibited, but was the first that excommunicated, the reading of heretical books; for about that time Wickliffe and Husse growing terrible, were they who first drove the papal court to a stricter policy of prohibiting. Which course Leo the Tenth and his successors followed, until the council of Trent and the Spanish inquisition, engendering together, brought forth or perfected those catalogues and expurging indexes, that rake through the entrails of many an old good author, with a violation worse than any could be offered to his tomb."*

After another humorous description of the system of licensing under the popes, he continues, "And thus ye have the inventors and the original of book licensing ripped up and drawn as lineally as any pedigree. We have it not, that can be heard of, from any ancient state, or polity, or church, nor by any statute left us by our ancestors elder or later; nor from the modern custom of any reformed city or

conscientiam generis humani aboleri arbitrabantur, expulsis insuper sapientiæ professoribus atque omni bonâ arte in exilium actâ, ne quid usquam honestum occurreret. Dedimus profecto grande patientiæ documentum: et sicut vetus ætas vidit quid ultimum in libertate esset, ita nos quid in servitute, adempto per inquisitiones et loquendi audiendique commercio. Memoriam quoque ipsam cum voce perdidissemus, si tam in nostra potestate esset oblivisci quam tacere."—

Vita J. Agric. cap. 3.

* Prose Works, vol. ii., p. 60.

church abroad; but from the most antichristian council, and the most tyrannous inquisition that ever inquired. Till then books were ever as freely admitted into the world as any other birth; the issue of the brain was no more stifled than the issue of the womb: no envious Juno sat cross-legged over the nativity of any man's intellectual offspring; but if it proved a monster, who denies but that it was justly burnt, or sunk into the sea? But that a book, in worse condition than a peccant soul, should be to stand before a jury ere it be born to the world, and undergo yet in darkness the judgment of Radamanth and his colleagues, ere it can pass the ferry backward into light, was never heard before, till that mysterious iniquity, provoked and troubled at the first entrance of reformation, sought out new limboes and new hells wherein they might include our books also within the number of their damned."*

He now proceeds to show, by instances, the innocuous and even beneficial effects resulting from the study of human error, and refers to the heathen learning of Moses, Daniel, and Paul, and the high ends it was made to subserve; and thence portrays the advantage derivable to the discipline and hardy training of virtue from occasional exposure to the temptation of intellectual error. "As, therefore," he says, "the state of man now is; what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear, without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and

* Prose Works, vol. ii., p. 62.

trial is by what is contrary. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental whiteness; which was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spenser, (whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas,) describing true temperance under the person of Guion, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon, and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, and yet abstain.”*

In connection with this he shows the necessary inefficacy of this restrictive scheme to prevent the propagation of error, humorously comparing it “to the exploit of that gallant man who thought to pound up the crows by shutting the park gate.” “If,” he continues, “we think to regulate printing, thereby to rectify manners, we must regulate all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightful to man. No music must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave and doric. There must be licensing dancers, that no gesture, motion, or deportment be taught our youth, but what by their allowance shall be thought honest; for such Plato was provided of. It will ask more than the work of twenty licensers to examine all the lutes, the violins, and the guitars in every house; they must not be suffered to prattle as they do, but must be licensed what they may say. And who shall silence all the airs and madrigals that whisper softness in chambers? The windows also, and the balconies must be thought on; these are shrewd books, with dangerous frontispieces, set to sale: who shall prohibit them, shall twenty licensers? The villagers also must have their visitors to inquire what lectures the bagpipe and the rebec reads, even to the ballatry and the gamut of every municipal fiddler.”†

Proceeding to the third topic of his discourse, he says,

* Prose Works, vol. ii., p. 68.

+ Ibid. p. 73.

“I lastly proceed from the no good it can do, to the manifest hurt it causes in being first the greatest discouragement and affront that can be offered to learning and to learned men.” “Well,” he adds, “knows he who uses to consider, that our faith and knowledge thrives by exercise, as well as our limbs and complexions. Truth is compared in Scripture to a streaming fountain; if her waters flow not in a perpetual progression, they sicken into a muddy pool of conformity and tradition. A man may be a heretic in the truth; and if he believe things only because his pastor says so, or the assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds becomes his heresy. . . . Truth indeed came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, lords and commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master’s second coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection. Suffer not these licensing prohibitions to stand at every place of opportunity forbidding and disturbing them that continue seeking, that continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyred saint.

“We boast our light; but if we look not wisely on the sun itself, it smites us into darkness. Who can discern those planets that are oft combust, and those stars of brightest magnitude that rise and set with the sun, until

the opposite motion of their orbs brings them to such a place in the firmament, where they may be seen evening or morning? The light which we have gained was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge. It is not the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitring of a bishop, and the removing him from off the presbyterian shoulders, that will make us a happy nation: no; if other things as great in the church, and in the rule of life, both economical and political, be not looked into and reformed, we have looked so long upon the blaze that Zuinglius and Calvin have beacons up to us, that we are stark blind.

“There be who perpetually complain of schisms and sects, and make it such a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. It is their own pride and ignorance which cause the disturbing, who neither will hear with meekness, nor can convince, yet all must be suppressed which is not found in their Syntagma. They are the troublers, they are the dividers of unity, who neglect, and permit not others, to unite those dissevered pieces which are yet wanting to the body of truth. To be still searching what we know not, by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it, (for all her body is homogeneous, and proportional,) this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union of cold, and neutral, and inwardly divided minds.”*

After dwelling with a glow of delight upon the imaginary spectacle of a people expanding their intellectual tastes, and constantly ministering to an unquenchable desire for advancement in knowledge and virtue, and resuggesting his cherished opinion that England was the selected instrument in the hand of Providence for the regeneration of the world, he gives vent to a sentiment far wider than the secondary selfishness of patriotism, in these immortal

* Prose Works, vol. ii., pp. 89, 90.

sentences:—“For as in a body when the blood is fresh, the spirits pure and vigorous, not only to vital, but to rational faculties, and those in the acutest and the pertest operations of wit and subtlety, it argues in what good plight and constitution the body is; so when the cheerfulness of the people is so sprightly up, as that it has not only wherewith to guard well its own freedom and safety, but to spare, and to bestow upon the solidest and sublimest points of controversy and new invention, it betokens us not degenerated, nor drooping to a fatal decay, by casting off the old and wrinkled skin of corruption to outlive these pangs, and wax young again, entering the glorious ways of truth and prosperous virtue, destined to become great and honourable in these latter ages. Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks: methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full midday beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms.

“What should ye do then, should ye suppress all this flowery crop of knowledge and new light sprung up and yet springing daily in this city? Should ye set an oligarchy of twenty engrossers over it, to bring a famine upon our minds again, when we shall know nothing but what is measured to us by their bushel? Believe it, lords and commons! they who counsel ye to such a suppressing, do as good as bid ye suppress yourselves; and I will soon show how. If it be desired to know the immediate cause of all this free writing and free speaking, there cannot be assigned a truer than your own mild, and free, and humane government; it is the liberty, lords and commons, which your own valorous and happy counsels have purchased us;

liberty which is the nurse of all great wits: this is that which hath rarefied and enlightened our spirits like the influence of heaven: this is that which hath enfranchised, enlarged, and lifted up our apprehensions degrees above themselves. . . . Yet when the new light which we beg for shines in upon us, there be who envy and oppose, if it come not first in at their casements. What a collusion is this, whenas we are exhorted by the wise man to use diligence, 'to seek for wisdom as for hidden treasures,' early and late, that another order shall enjoin us, to know nothing but by statute? When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage, drawn forth his reasons as it were a battle ranged, scattered and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun, if he please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument; for his opponents then to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valour enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of truth. For who knows not that truth is strong, next to the Almighty; she needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings to make her victorious, those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power; give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps, for then she speaks not true, as the old Proteus did, who spake oracles only when he was caught and bound, but then rather she turns herself into all shapes except her own, and perhaps tunes her voice according to the time, as Micaiah did before Ahab, until she be adured into her own likeness."*

Such was the Areopagitica of Milton. Compared with the sordid intolerance of the prelatical regime, and with the more recent and equally despicable bigotry of the presbyterians, it almost wears the majesty of inspiration; and it

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 94, 96.

may well be doubted whether the whole compass of literature furnishes a treatise enriched with such elevated sentiments, such glorious aspirations, and such stately and overwhelming eloquence.

If our estimate of the character of the presbyterians of that day could be lowered by any additional knowledge of their proceedings, it would be by the fact that Milton's plea for unlicensed printing, while it covered them with shame, led to no practical result, but that the barbarous system of controlling literature by the fetters of the magistrate was maintained until the time when their continued baseness and treachery to the cause of freedom sickened the nation, and involved them and the Independents, who were worthy of a better fate, in one common overthrow. They even witnessed unmoved the conversion of one of the licensers themselves. This was Gilbert Mabbot, who sought his discharge from this ignominious service, according to Jolland, in 1645. This date, however, would seem to be incorrect, as a minute statement of the case is given in a weekly paper entitled "A perfect Diurnal of some Passages in Parliament, and the daily proceedings of the army under his Excellency the Lord Fairfax, from May 21st to May 28, 1649." The statement is as follows:—"Mr. Mabbot hath long desired several members of the house, and lately the council of state, to move the house that he might be discharged of licensing books for the future, for the reasons following: viz. Because many thousands of scandalous and malignant pamphlets have been published with his name thereunto, as if he had licensed the same, (though he never saw them) on purpose (as he conceives) to prejudice him in his reputation amongst the honest party of this nation. II. Because that employment (he conceives) is unjust and illegal, as to the ends of its first institution, viz., to stop the press from publishing anything that might discover the corruption of church and state, in the time of popery, episcopacy, and tyranny; the better to keep the people in ignorance, and carry on their popish, fac-

tious, and tyrannical designs, for the enslaving and destruction both of the bodies and souls of all the free people of this nation. III. Because licensing is as great a monopoly as ever was in this nation, in that all men's judgments, reasons, &c., are to be bound up in the licenser's (as to licensing); for if the author of any sheet, book, or treatise, write not to please the fancy, and come within the compass of the licenser's judgment, then he is not to receive any stamp of authority for publishing thereof. IV. Because it is lawful (in his judgment) to print any book, sheet, &c., without licensing, so as the author and printers do subscribe their true names thereunto, that so they may be liable to answer the contents thereof; and if they offend therein, then to be punished by such laws as are or shall be for those cases provided. A committee of the council of state being satisfied with these and other reasons of Mr. Mabbot concerning licensing, the council of state reports to the house: upon which the house ordered this day that the said Mr. Mabbot be discharged of licensing books for the future."

CHAPTER X.

MILTON'S SONNETS—DOMESTIC INCIDENTS—CONDUCT OF THE PRESBYTERIANS—PUBLICATION OF "THE TENURE OF KINGS AND MAGISTRATES"—EULOGIES ON FAIRFAX, VANE, AND BRADSHAW—ANALYSIS OF THE TREATISE ON "THE TENURE OF KINGS AND MAGISTRATES."

THE year 1645 constitutes an interval in which we find Milton refreshing his mind after a campaign of controversy with the more congenial pursuits of imaginative literature. He now published, with his name, an edition of all his English, Latin, and Italian poems. Of the twenty-three sonnets which Milton has left us, only ten were published in this volume, the rest having been produced subsequently. Dr. Johnson says, that "they do not deserve any particular criticism, for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and the twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation. The fabric of a sonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours, which having greater variety of termination requires the rhymes to be often changed." Alluding once in conversation to the inferiority of Milton's sonnets to the other efforts of his muse, Dr. Johnson characteristically observed, "Milton was a genius that could carve a Colossus from a rock, but could not cut heads upon cherry stones;"

and there can be no doubt that such a mind as his moved with unwonted constraint under the fetters imposed by the frequent rhymes essential to the construction of the sonnet. It is, indeed, best adapted to the language of Italy, in which it is indigenious, and does not arrive at perfection when cultivated in any other soil. Mr. Macaulay takes a different and somewhat novel view of these publications. "Traces," he says, "of the peculiar character of Milton may be found in all his works, but it is most strongly displayed in the sonnets. Those remarkable poems have been underrated by critics who have not understood their nature. They have no epigrammatic point. There is none of the ingenuity of Filicaga in the thought—none of the hard and brilliant enamel of Petrarch in the style. They are simple but majestic records of the feelings of the poet; as little tricked out for the public eye as his diary would have been. A victory, an unexpected attack upon the city, a momentary fit of depression or exultation, a jest thrown out against one of his books, a dream which for a short time restored to him that beautiful face over which the grave had closed for ever, led him to musings which, without effort, shaped themselves into verse. The unity of sentiment and severity of style which characterise these little pieces remind us of the Greek Anthology, or, perhaps, still more, of the Collects of the English Liturgy. The noble poem on the Massacres of Piedmont, is strictly a collect in verse.

"The sonnets are more or less striking according as the occasions which gave birth to them are more or less interesting. But they are almost without exception dignified by a sobriety and greatness of mind to which we know not where to look for a parallel. It would, indeed, be scarcely safe to draw any decided inferences as to the character of a writer, from passages directly egotistical. But the qualities which we have ascribed to Milton, though, perhaps, most strongly marked in those parts of his works which treat of his personal feelings, are distinguishable in every page, and impart

to all his writings, prose and poetry, English, Latin, and Italian, a strong family likeness.”*

Of the sonnets thus specially referred to by these critics, the two following must suffice as specimens. The former was written when an assault on the city was anticipated, the royal forces having advanced as near to it as Brentford.

“ Captain, or Colonel, or Knight in arms,
 Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
 If deed of honour did thee ever please,
 Guard them, and him within protect from harms.
 He can requite thee; for he knows the charms
 That call fame o’er such gentle acts as these,
 And he can spread thy name o’er lands and seas,
 Whatever clime the sun’s bright circle warms.†
 Lift not thy spear against the Muses’ bower:
 The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
 The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
 Went to the ground: and the repeated air
 Of sad Electra’s poet had the power
 To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.”

The second is addressed to the Lord General Cromwell, and is as follows:—

“ Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud,
 Not of war only, but detractions rude,
 Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
 To peace and truth thy glorious way hast plough’d,
 And on the neck of crowned Fortune proud
 Hast rear’d God’s trophies, and his work pursued;
 While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots imbued,
 And Dunbar field resounds thy praises loud,
 And Worcester’s laureat wreath. Yet much remains
 To conquer still; Peace hath her victories
 No less renown’d than War: † new foes arise
 Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains.
 Help us to save free conscience from the paw
 Of hireling wolves, whose gospel is their maw.”

In the year 1646, the wife of Milton gave birth to her

* Edinburgh Review, vol. xlii. pp. 324, 325.

† Milton evidently had in his mind Horace’s Ode to Censorinus. *Carminum. Lib. iv., od. 8.*

‡ *Occulta spolia, et plures de pace triumphos.—Juvenal.*

first daughter, Anne, who, from some cause unknown, was lame either from her birth or from very early childhood. In the following year occurred the death of his aged and only surviving parent. About the same time his wife's family were restored to the possession of their patrimonial estates, and finally quitted the roof beneath which they had been so generously sheltered. While detailing the few particulars which we possess of Milton's private life at this time, it may be added, that in 1647 his family was increased by the birth of his second daughter, Mary; and that, in the same year, for what reason is not known, he removed from his house in Barbican to one in Holborn, the back part of which opened into Lincoln's-inn-fields.

Meanwhile, public events were occurring of sufficient magnitude to influence the complexion of this country's constitution and destiny, even to the days in which we live, but in which the privacy of Milton's position did not allow of his taking an active part.

The civil war had been virtually terminated by the battle of Naseby, and the misguided monarch was from this time a captive; his condition being only varied by the different degrees of liberty which the caution of his victors, justified by a life of faithlessness and falsehood, inclined them to concede. "They had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind; a man who made and broke promises with equal facility; a man whose honour had been a hundred times pawned, and never redeemed." The essential duplicity of his character marked every act of that brief period of probation which intervened between the final defeat of his arms and the termination of his career. The leaders of the Parliament and the army, alike wearied out and disgusted with his violation of every agreement which the public safety required him to enter into, arraigned him before the Parliament, and convicted and sentenced him to the death of a traitor. The presbyterians, now removed from power, in a spirit worthy of their recent history, endangered the public

tranquillity by their clamours against the execution of the king. During this time Milton had been silent; he had, indeed, written the work we have next to examine, entitled “The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,” in the course of the year 1647, but it was not published until after the execution of the monarch, in January, 1648, and then only for the purpose of composing the public mind, and reconciling the disaffected to the new government. “Though we think, says Mr. Macaulay, “the conduct of the regicides blameable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred; and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion; but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling which would have restrained us from committing the act, would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done, while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done.”*

Milton himself, at a subsequent period, when it was unnecessary for him to defend himself, declares, “Neither did I write anything respecting the regal jurisdiction, till the king, proclaimed an enemy by the senate, and overcome in arms, was brought captive to his trial, and condemned to suffer death. When, indeed, some of the presbyterian leaders, lately the most inveterately hostile to Charles, but now irritated by the prevalence of the Independents in the nation and the senate, and stung with resentment, not of the fact, but of their own want of power to commit it, exclaimed against the sentence of the Parliament upon the king, and raised what commotions they could, by daring to assert that the doctrine of the Protestant divines, and of all

* Edinburgh Review, vol. xlii., p. 334.

the reformed churches, was strong in reprobation of this severity to kings,—then at length I conceived it to be my duty publicly to oppose so much obvious and palpable falsehood. Neither did I then direct my argument or persuasion personally against Charles; but, by the testimony of many of the most eminent divines, I proved what course of conduct might lawfully be observed towards tyrants in general; and, with the zeal almost of a preacher, I attacked the strange ignorance or the wonderful impudence of these men, who had lately amused us with the promises of better things. This work was not published till after the death of the king; and was written rather to tranquillize the minds of men, than to discuss any part of the question respecting Charles—a question the decision of which belonged to the magistrate, and not to me, and which had now received its final determination.”

Although Milton had never actively interfered in the measures which led to the execution of Charles, he was no uninterested observer of the great drama of which England was the theatre. No man felt more deeply than he what the most eloquent of his analysts has written, that “he lived at one of the most memorable eras in the history of mankind; at the very crisis of the great conflict between Oromasdes and Arimanes,—liberty and despotism, reason and prejudice. That great battle was fought for no single generation, for no single land. The destinies of the human race were staked on the same cast with the freedom of the English people. Then were first proclaimed those mighty principles which have since worked their way into the depths of the American forests, which have roused Greece from the slavery and degradation of two thousand years, and which, from one end of Europe to the other, have kindled an unquenchable fire in the hearts of the oppressed, and loosed the knees of the oppressors with a strange and unwonted fear!”*

* Edinburgh Review, vol. xlii., pp. 324, 325.

What Milton's views were of the much-disputed act that interrupted the royal succession, is sufficiently manifest from the treatise presently to be noticed, and from his two Defences of the People of England. This, however, seems the appropriate place in which to present his opinions of the principal actors in that tragic scene. Dr. Johnson observes, with his accustomed injustice, that no man who has written so much as Milton has, is so seldom known to bestow praise upon others. We have already noticed the cordial respect he repeatedly testified for his Italian friends: the catalogue in refutation of Dr. Johnson's remark will now be increased by the names of Sir Henry Vane, Fairfax, Bradshaw, and Cromwell. His eulogy upon the Protector will be most fitly introduced hereafter. Those upon Fairfax and Vane are contained in the following sonnets:—

“ TO THE LORD GENERAL FAIRFAX.

Fairfax! whose name in arms through Europe rings,
 Filling each mouth with envy or with praise,
 And all her jealous monarchs with amaze
 And rumours loud, that daunt remotest kings;
 Thy firm unshaken virtue ever brings
 Victory home, though new rebellions raise
 Their hydra heads, and the false North displays
 Her broken league to imp their serpent wings.
 O, yet a noble task awaits thy hand,
 (For what can war but endless war still breed?)
 Till truth and right from violence be freed,
 And public faith clear'd from the shameful brand
 Of public fraud. In vain doth Valour bleed,
 While Avarice and Rapine share the land.”

“ TO SIR HENRY VANE THE YOUNGER.

Vane! young in years, but in sage counsel old,
 Than whom a better senator ne'er held
 The helm of Rome, when gowns, not arms, repell'd
 The fierce Epirot and the Afran bold:
 Whether to settle peace, or to unfold
 The drift of hollow states hard to be spell'd;
 Then to advise how War may, best upheld,
 Move by her two main nerves, iron and gold,

In all her equipage : besides to know
 Both spiritual power and civil, what each means,
 What severs each, thou hast learn'd, which few have done
 The bounds of either sword to thee we owe :
 Therefore on thy firm hand Religion leans
 In peace, and reckons thee her eldest son."

The historical panegyric upon Bradshaw is found in Milton's "Second Defence of the People of England;" and as that work, like the "First Defence," was written in Latin, it is presented in the following translation:—"John Bradshaw* (a name which will be repeated with applause wherever liberty is cherished or is known) was sprung from a noble family. All his early life he sedulously employed in making himself acquainted with the laws of his country; he then practised with singular success and reputation at the bar: he showed himself an intrepid and unwearied advocate for the liberties of the people: he took an active part in the most momentous affairs of the State, and occasionally discharged the functions of a judge, with the most inviolable integrity. At last, when he was entreated by the Parliament to preside in the trial of the king, he did not refuse the dangerous office. To a profound knowledge

* An American monumental inscription to the memory of this extraordinary man should not be omitted here. It is said to have been dated from Anapolis, June 21st, 1773, and to have been engraven on a cannon, whence copies were taken and hung up in almost every house in the continent of America:—

"STRANGER! ere thou pass, contemplate this cannon, nor regardless be told that near its base lies deposited the dust of JOHN BRADSHAW, who, nobly superior to selfish regards, despising alike the pageantry of courtly splendour, the blast of calumny, and the terror of regal vengeance, presided in the illustrious band of heroes and patriots who fairly and openly adjudged CHARLES STUART, tyrant of England, to a public and exemplary death, thereby presenting to the amazed world, and transmitting down through applauding ages, the most glorious example of unshaken virtue, love of freedom, and impartial justice, ever exhibited on the blood-stained theatre of human action. Oh! reader, pass not on till thou hast blessed his memory, and never, never forget, *that rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.*"

of the law, he added the most comprehensive views, the most generous sentiments, manners the most obliging and the most pure. Hence he discharged that office with a propriety almost without a parallel; he inspired both respect and awe; and, though menaced by the daggers of so many assassins, he conducted himself with so much consistency and gravity—with so much presence of mind, and so much dignity of demeanour, that he seems to have been purposely destined by Providence for that part which he so nobly acted on the theatre of the world. And his glory is as much exalted above that of all other tyrannicides, as it is more humane, more just, and more strikingly grand, judicially to condemn a tyrant, than to put him to death without a trial. In other respects there was no forbidding austerity, no moroseness in his manner; he was courteous and benign; but the great character which he then sustained, he with perfect consistency still sustains, so that you would suppose that not only then, but in every future period of his life, he was sitting in judgment upon the king. In the public business his activity is unwearied; and he alone is equal to a host. At home his hospitality is as splendid as his fortune will permit: in his friendships there is the most inflexible fidelity; and no one more readily discerns merit, or more liberally rewards it. Men of piety and learning, ingenious persons in all professions, those who have been distinguished by their courage or their misfortunes, are free to participate his bounty; and if they want not his bounty, they are sure to share his friendship and esteem. He never ceases to extol the merits of others, or to conceal his own; and no one was ever more ready to accept the excuses, or to pardon the hostility, of his political opponents. If he undertake to plead the cause of the oppressed, to solicit the favour or deprecate the resentment of the powerful, to reprove the public ingratitude towards any particular individual, his address and his perseverance are beyond all praise. On such occasions no one could

desire a patron or a friend more able, more zealous, or more eloquent. No menace could divert him from his purpose! no intimidation on the one hand, and no promise of emolument or promotion on the other, could alter the serenity of his countenance, or shake the firmness of his soul. By these virtues, which endeared him to his friends, and commanded the respect even of his enemies, he, sir, has acquired a name which, while you and such as you are mouldering in oblivion, will flourish in every age, and in every country in the world.”*

The title of the treatise now under notice is as follows :—
 “The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates: proving that it is lawful, and hath been held so through all ages, for any, who have the power, to call to account a tyrant, or wicked king, and, after due conviction, to depose, and put him to death, if the ordinary magistrate have neglected or denied to do it. And that they who of late so much blame deposing, are the men that did it themselves.” Milton commences with laying down what are the true moral principles with relation to political tyranny, affirming that “none can love freedom heartily but good men;† the rest love not freedom, but licence, which never hath more scope or more indulgence than under tyrants;” and, with pointed reference to the presbyterian apostacy, he adds, “And although sometimes for shame, and when it comes to their own grievances, of purse especially, they would seem good patriots, and side with the better cause, yet when others, for the deliverance of their country endued with fortitude and heroic

* Prose Works, vol. i., pp. 267, 268.

† Robert Hall, in his sermon on the death of Dr. Ryland, observes that it has been alleged against the Christian religion, that it does not prescribe the duties of patriotism and friendship; but argues, in reply, that it supplies the only system of morals from which those virtues can result. With respect to friendship, Cicero affirmed, in his treatise “*De Amicitia*,” that it could only subsist between virtuous men; and Milton here maintains that general moral excellence must engender that sentiment which alone deserves the name of patriotism.

virtue to fear nothing but the curse written against those ‘that do the work of the Lord negligently,’ would go on to remove, not only the calamities and thraldoms of a people, but the roots and causes whence they spring; straight these men, and sure helpers at need, as if they hated only the miseries, but not the mischiefs, after they have juggled and paltered with the world, bandied and borne arms against their king, divested him, disanointed him, nay, cursed him all over in their pulpits, and their pamphlets, to the engaging of sincere and real men beyond what is possible or honest to retreat from, not only turn revolvers from those principles, which only could at first move them, but lay the strain of disloyalty, and worse, on those proceedings which are the necessary consequences of their own former actions; nor disliked by themselves, were they managed to the entire advantages of their own faction; not considering the while that he toward whom they boasted their new fidelity, counted them accessory; and by those statutes and laws, which they so impotently brandish against others, would have doomed them to a traitor’s death for what they have done already.”*

* Mr. St. John, in his edition of the prose works of Milton, makes the following comment upon this passage:—“Dr. Zachary Grey, the learned, but partial and prejudiced editor of *Hudibras*, has, with the diligence of one who performs a labour of love, scraped together in his notes everything the paltry literature of the Restoration could supply against the preachers and soldiers of the Commonwealth. He, however, corroborates Milton’s charge against the Presbyterians, of having at the outset preached a crusade against royalty; but is far from joining with the poet in reprehending their backwardness to ‘fight it out, *mordicus*—to death.’ ‘The Presbyterians (many of whom, before the war, had got, he observes, into parish churches) preached the people into rebellion; incited them to take up arms and fight the Lord’s battles, and destroy the Amalekites, root and branch, hip and thigh, and to root out the wicked from the earth; that was, in their sense, all that loved the king, the bishops, and the common prayer.’ ‘It has been fully made out, that many of the regicides were drawn into the grand rebellion by the direful imprecations of seditious

Milton now subjects the meanness and tergiversation of the presbyterians to an unsparing exposure, showing that they reversed their policy from purely selfish motives; that they were tainted at heart with the same spiritual despotism under which they had themselves suffered; and that they were seeking to profit by a political transition, in order to establish themselves in the place vacated by the frustrated faction of prelacy. He then addresses himself to the ethical part of his subject, in the following passage:—"But who in particular is a tyrant, cannot be determined in a general discourse, otherwise than by supposition; his particular charge, and the sufficient proof of it, must determine that: which I leave to magistrates, at least to the uprighter sort of them, and of the people, though in number less by many, in whom faction least hath prevailed above the law of nature and right reason, to judge as they find cause. But this I dare own as part of my faith, that if such a one there be, by whose commission whole massacres have been committed on his faithful subjects, his provinces offered to pawn or alienation, as the hire of those whom he had solicited to come in and destroy whole cities and countries; be he king, or tyrant, or emperor, the sword of justice is above him; in whose hand soever is found sufficient power to avenge the effusion and so great a deluge of innocent blood. For if all human power to execute, not accidentally, but intendedly, the wrath of God upon evil-doers, without exception, be of God; then that power, whether ordinary, or, if that fail, extraordinary, so executing that intent of God, is lawful,

preachers from the pulpit.' Dr. South relates that 'he had it from the mouth of Axtell the regicide, that he, with many more, went into that execrable war with such a controlling horror upon their spirits from those public sermons, especially of Brooks and Calamy, that they verily believed they should have been accursed of God for ever if they had not acted their part in the dismal tragedy, and heartily done the devil's work.'—(*Sermons*, i. 513.) He adds, that 'it was the pulpit that supplied the field with swordsmen, and the parliament-house with incendiaries.' "

and not to be resisted. But to unfold more at large this whole question, though with all expedient brevity, I shall here set down, from first beginning, the original of kings; how and wherefore exalted to that dignity above their brethren; and from thence shall prove, that, turning to tyranny, they may be as lawfully deposed and punished, as they were at first elected: this I shall do by authorities and reasons, not learnt in corners among schisms and heresies, as our doubling divines are ready to calumniate, but fetched out of the midst of choicest and most authentic learning, and no prohibited authors; nor many heathen, but Mosaical, Christian, orthodoxal, and, which must needs be more convincing to our adversaries, presbyterial.”*

In pursuance of this purpose, he first presents a brief but philosophical history of political constitutions, and deduces from it the following conclusions:—First, that the power of kings and magistrates is only derivative—transferred and committed to them by the people, in trust for the common good of the entire community, in whom the power yet remains fundamentally, and from whom it cannot be alienated without a violation of their natural birthright; and consequently that such titles as sovereign lord, natural lord, and the like, are “either arrogancies or flatteries.” Secondly, “that to say, as is usual, the king hath as good right to his crown and dignity as any man to his inheritance, is to make the subject no better than the king’s slave, his chattel, or his possession that may be bought and sold: and doubtless, if hereditary title were sufficiently inquired, the best foundation of it would be found but either in courtesy or convenience. But suppose it to be of right hereditary, what can be more just and legal, if a subject for certain crimes be to forfeit by law from himself and posterity all his inheritance to the king, than that a king, for crimes proportional, should forfeit all his title and inheritance to the people? Unless the people must be thought created all

* Prose Works, vol. ii., pp. 7, 8.

for him, he not for them, and they all in one body inferior to him single; which were a kind of treason against the dignity of mankind to affirm. Thirdly, it follows, that to say kings are accountable to none but God, is the overturning of all law and government. For if they may refuse to give account, then all covenants made with them at coronation, all oaths are in vain, and mere mockeries; all laws which they swear to keep, made to no purpose: for if the king fear not God, (as how many of them do not,) we hold then our lives and estates by the tenure of his mere grace and mercy, as from a god, not a mortal magistrate; a position that none but court parasites or men besotted would maintain!"*

This position Milton fortifies by references to ancient history, both sacred and profane, and adds:—"It follows, lastly, that since the king or magistrate holds his authority of the people, both originally and naturally for their good, in the first place, and not his own, then may the people, as oft as they shall judge it for the best, either choose him or reject him, retain him or depose him, though no tyrant, merely by the liberty and right of freeborn men to be governed as seems to them best." This he supports by numerous passages both from the Old and New Testaments.

He next shows that the sacred writers, in prescribing the duty of civil subordination, at the same time define the power to which such obedience is due, namely, those who are a terror only to evil-doers, and a protection and encouragement to those that do well; and adds, "If such only be mentioned here as powers to be obeyed, and our submission to them only required, then doubtless those powers that do the contrary are no powers ordained of God; and by consequence no obligation laid upon us to obey, or not to resist them. And it may be well observed, that both these apostles, whenever they give this precept, express it in terms not concrete, but abstract, as logicians are wont to

* Prose Works, vol. ii., pp. 12, 13.

speak; that is, they mention the ordinance, the power, the authority, before the persons that execute it; and what that power is, lest we should be deceived, they describe exactly. So that if the power be not such, or the person execute not such power, neither the one nor the other is of God, but of the devil, and by consequence to be resisted.” After fencing this position, as before, with the authority of revelation, he concludes:—“We may from hence with more ease and force of argument determine what a tyrant is, and what the people may do against him. A tyrant, whether by wrong or by right coming to the crown, is he who, regarding neither law nor the common good, reigns only for himself and his faction: thus St. Basil, among others, defines him. And because his power is great, his will boundless and exorbitant, the fulfilling whereof is for the most part accompanied with innumerable wrongs and oppressions of the people—murders, massacres, rapes, adulteries, desolation, and subversion of cities and whole provinces—look how great a good and happiness a just king is, so great a mischief is a tyrant; as he the public father of his country, so this the common enemy. Against whom what the people lawfully may do, as against a common pest and destroyer of mankind, I suppose no man of clear judgment need go further to be guided than by the very principles of nature in him.”*

Milton next shows that there is no such peculiarity in the relation subsisting between a monarch and his subjects, as removes it from the operation of those great moral principles which apply to all the other relations of mankind. “Who knows not,” he says, “that there is a mutual bond of amity and brotherhood between man and man over all the world? neither is it the English sea that can sever us from that duty and relation: a straiter bond yet there is between fellow-subjects, neighbours, and friends. But when any of these do one to another so as hostility could do no worse, what doth the law decree less against them, than

* Prose Works, vol. ii., pp. 17, 18.

open enemies and invaders? or if the law be not present or too weak, what doth it warrant us to less than single defence or civil war? and from that time forward the law of civil defensive war differs nothing from the law of foreign hostility. Nor is it distance of place that makes enmity, but enmity that makes distance. He, therefore, that keeps peace with me, near or remote, of whatsoever nation, is to me, as far as all civil and human offices, an Englishman and a neighbour: but if an Englishman, forgetting all laws, human, civil, and religious, offend against life and liberty, to him offended, and to the law in his behalf, though born in the same womb, he is no better than a Turk, a Saracen, a heathen.”*

This position Milton proceeds to fortify by the Old Testament examples of Ehud, Samuel, and David; and then, passing from example to precept, descends to the principles of the New Testament dispensation. He comments on the contrast established between the “princes of the Gentiles” and his servants; and emphatically notices that he speaks of them as “they that seem to rule” (in the common version, “they which are accounted to rule”), “either slighting or accounting them no lawful rulers;” adding, “and although he himself were the meekest, and came on earth to be so, yet to a tyrant we hear him not vouchsafe an humble word; but, ‘Tell that fox,’ Luke xiii. 32. So far we ought to be from thinking that Christ and his gospel should be made a sanctuary from justice for tyrants, to whom his law before never gave such protection.”

Pursuing the course of this argument, from the times of Christ through the history of nominally Christian states, he thus applies it to our own country:—“Gildas, the most ancient of all our historians, speaking of those times wherein the Roman empire decaying, quitted and relinquished what right they had by conquest to this island, and resigned it all into the people’s hands, testifies that the people thus

* Prose Works, vol. ii., pp. 17, 18.

reinvested with their own original right, about the year 446, both elected them kings, whom they thought best, (the first Christian British kings that ever reigned here since the Romans,) and by the same right, when they apprehended cause, usually deposed and put them to death. This is the most fundamental and ancient tenure that any king of England can produce or pretend to; in comparison of which, all other titles and pleas are but of yesterday. If any object, that Gildas condemns the Britons for so doing, the answer is as ready—that he condemns them no more for so doing than he did before for choosing such; for, saith he, ‘They anointed them kings not of God, but such as were more bloody than the rest.’ Next, he condemns them not at all for deposing or putting them to death, but for doing it over hastily, without trial or well examining the cause, and for electing others worse in their room. Thus we have here both domestic and most ancient examples, that the people of Britain have deposed and put to death their kings in those primitive Christian times. And to couple reason with example, if the church in all ages, primitive, Romish, or Protestant, held it ever no less their duty than the power of their keys, though without express warrant of Scripture, to bring indifferently both king and peasant under the utmost rigour of their canons and censures ecclesiastical, even to the smiting him with a final excommunication, if he persist impenitent; what hinders but that the temporal law both may and ought, though without a special text or precedent, extend with like indifference to the civil sword, to the cutting off, without exemption, him that capitally offends, seeing that justice and religion are from the same God, and works of justice oftentimes more acceptable?”*

After tracing the thread of his argument through more modern history, he closes with his main opponents by citing John Knox, the head of the presbyterian branch of the Reformation, who “maintained openly, at a general assem-

* Prose Works, vol. ii., pp. 23, 24.

bly, in a dispute against Lethington, the secretary of state, that subjects might and ought to execute God's judgments upon their king; that the fact of Jehu and others against their king, having the ground of God's ordinary command to put such and such offenders to death, was not extraordinary, but to be imitated of all that preferred the honour of God to the affection of flesh and wicked princes; that kings, if they offend, have no privilege to be exempted from the punishments of law, more than any other subject: so that if the king be a murderer, adulterer, or idolater, he should suffer, not as a king, but as an offender; and this position he repeats again and again before them." This judgment he further shows to be in accordance with the principles of the Reformers generally. "And Knox," he adds, "being commanded by the nobility to write to Calvin and other learned men for their judgments in that question, refused, alleging that both himself was fully resolved in conscience, and had heard their judgments, and had the same opinion under handwriting of many the most godly and most learned that he knew in Europe; that if he should move the question to them again, what should he do but show his own forgetfulness or inconstancy?" To this he adds the embassy of the Scots to Queen Elizabeth, with reference to the deposition of Mary, in which they openly assumed the right of making and deposing monarchs, maintaining that regal power was nothing else but a mutual covenant or stipulation between king and people, and proceeds to prove that the presbyterians had in Parliament acted on this constitutional principle. "There is nothing," he says, "that so actually makes a king of England, as rightful possession and supremacy in all causes both civil and ecclesiastical: and nothing that so actually makes a subject of England as those two oaths of allegiance and supremacy observed without equivocating, or any mental reservation. Out of doubt, then, when the king shall command things already constituted in church or state,

obedience is the true essence of a subject, either to do, if it be lawful, or if he hold the thing unlawful, to submit to that penalty which the law imposes, so long as he intends to remain a subject. Therefore when the people, or any part of them, shall rise against the king and his authority, executing the law in anything established, civil or ecclesiastical, I do not say it is rebellion, if the thing commanded though established be unlawful, and that they sought first all due means of redress (and no man is further bound to law); but I say it is an absolute renouncing both of supremacy and allegiance, which, in one word, is an actual and total deposing of the king, and the setting up of another supreme authority over them. And whether the Presbyterians have not done all this and much more, they will not put me, I suppose, to reckon up a seven years' story, fresh in the memory of all men." After detailing their political course, he concludes: "To speak more in brief, they have deposed him, not only by depriving him of the execution of his authority, but by conferring it upon others." It is singular that Milton should not have adopted the more direct argument used by the latest editor of his prose works. Mr. St. John places them in the following simple dilemma: The Presbyterians having taken up arms against the king, and fought with him in the field, had necessarily been often in a position where they might have slain him. If they were now right, therefore, they had then been wrong; and *vice versa*.

He next lays down that covenants, of whatever description, including that between a king and a people, are absolutely voided by the violation of their conditions, and that from this must arise an appeal to the original principles of justice, as if such covenant had never existed; and having shown that these conditions had been repeatedly violated by the deposed monarch, he vindicates the course which had been pursued towards him. "It is not," he says, "neither ought to be, the glory of a protestant state never to have

put their king to death ; it is the glory of a protestant king never to have deserved death. And if the parliament and military council do what they do without precedent, if it appear their duty, it argues the more wisdom, virtue, and magnanimity that they know themselves able to be a precedent to others, who perhaps in future ages, if they prove not too degenerate, will look up with honour, and aspire towards these exemplary and matchless deeds of their ancestors, as to the highest top of their civil glory and emulation ; which heretofore, in the pursuance of fame and foreign dominion, spent itself vaingloriously abroad, but henceforth may learn a better fortitude, to dare execute highest justice on them that shall by force of arms endeavour the oppressing and bereaving of religion and their liberty at home. That no unbridled potentate or tyrant, but to his sorrow, for the future may presume such high and irresponsible licence over mankind, to havoc and turn upside down whole kingdoms of men, as though they were no more in respect of his perverse will than a nation of pismires." *

This he further justifies, in conclusion, by citing the authority of Luther, Calvin, Zwinglius, Bucer, Paræus, Knox, and several other authorities, from among the earliest and best of the Reformers. Unhappily his arguments and his eloquence were alike addressed to the ears of the deaf. The Presbyterians still maintained the spirit of prelacy, under the guise of Nonconformity, and to them must be attributed the extinction of the fairest prospect of religious freedom that ever shone upon this nation, and the gloomy darkness in which it sunk, and which the efforts of succeeding centuries have not prevailed to disperse.

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 34.

CHAPTER XI.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE ARTICLES OF PEACE—MANIFESTO OF THE PRESBYTERY AT BELFAST—MILTON COMPOSES FOUR BOOKS OF HIS ENGLISH HISTORY—IS APPOINTED LATIN SECRETARY UNDER CROMWELL—SELECTION FROM HIS LETTERS OF STATE—PERSECUTION OF THE WALDENSES—HIS SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS IN THEIR BEHALF—HIS SONNET ON THE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT.

MILTON's next work was entitled "Observations on the Articles of Peace with the Irish Rebels, and the Representation of the Presbytery at Belfast." On the humiliating articles of peace concluded by the Earl of Ormond, in the name of the king, with the monsters who had murdered in cold blood forty thousand of their Protestant fellow subjects, his opinion is thus expressed:—"As for these articles of peace made with those inhuman rebels and papists of Ireland by the late king, as one of his last masterpieces, we may be confidently persuaded, that no true-born Englishman can so much as barely read them without indignation and disdain, that those bloody rebels, and so proclaimed and judged of by the king himself, after the merciless and barbarous massacre of so many thousand English, (who had used their right and title to that country with such tenderness and moderation, and might otherwise have secured themselves with ease against their treachery,) should be now graced and rewarded with such freedoms and enlargements, as none

of their ancestors could ever merit by their best obedience, which at best was always treacherous; to be enfranchised with full liberty equal to their conquerors, whom the just revenge of ancient piracies, cruel captivities, and the causeless infestation of our coast had warrantably called over, and the long prescription of many hundred years, besides what other titles are acknowledged by their own Irish parliament, had fixed and seated in that soil with as good a right as the merest natives.”*

The manifesto of the Presbytery at Belfast is scarcely less offensive to the generous nature of Milton; it breathes throughout a spirit of sanctimoniousness, bigotry, and arrogance. One only of their charges against the Parliament shall be noticed here, for the sake of the admirable sentiment it elicited from Milton in reply. The charge is, that they laboured “to establish by laws a universal toleration of all religions, which is an innovation overturning of unity in religion, and so directly repugnant to the Word of God.” “This,” he replies, “touches not the State; for certainly, were they so minded, they need not labour it, but do it, having power in their hands; and we know of no Act as yet passed to that purpose. But suppose it done, wherein is the covenant broke? The covenant enjoins us to endeavour the extirpation first of popery and prelacy, then of heresy, schism, and profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness. And this we cease not to do by all effectual and proper means: but these divines might know, that to extirpate all these things can be no work of the civil sword, but of the spiritual, which is the work of God. No man well in his wits, endeavouring to root up weeds out of his ground, instead of using the spade will take a mallet or a beetle. Nor doth the covenant any way engage us to extirpate or to prosecute the men, but the heresies and errors in them, which we tell these divines, and the rest that understand not, belongs

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 180.

chiefly to their own function, in the diligent preaching and insisting upon sound doctrine, in the confuting, not the railing down, of errors, encountering both in public and private conference, and by the power of truth, not of persecution, subduing those authors of heretical opinions. . . . And whereas they affirm, that the tolerating of all religions, in the manner that we tolerate them, is an innovation; we must acquaint them, that we are able to make it good, if need be, both by Scripture and the primitive fathers, and the frequent assertion of whole churches and protestant states in their remonstrances and expostulations against the popish tyranny over souls. . . . And surely, when we put down bishops and put up presbyters, which the most of them have made use of to enrich and exalt themselves, and turn the first heel against their benefactors, we did not think, that one classic fraternity, so obscure and so remote, should involve us and all state-affairs within the censure and jurisdiction of Belfast, upon pretence of overseeing their own charge. We very well know, that church-censures are limited to church matters, and these within the compass of their own province, or, to say more truly, of their own congregation: that affairs of state are not for their meddling, as we could urge even from their own invectives and protestations against the bishops, wherein they tell them with much fervency, that ministers of the gospel, neither by that function, nor any other which they ought to accept, have the least warrant to be pragmatrical in the state.”*

The publication of this treatise closed the controversial campaign, and Milton again retreated to the more serene and congenial pursuits of literature. He had long devoted himself in intention to the production of a complete history of his country, from the earliest times of which any records had descended to posterity. This work he now commenced, and completed four books of it, conducting the narrative to the union of the Heptarchy under Egbert. This work was

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 189, 193, 194.

never completed, though two more books, extending the narrative to the Norman conquest, were written in a subsequent interval of literary leisure. Of this earlier portion the historical value assigned by himself is exceedingly small. The period it embraced was the twilight interval of myths and phantoms between the night of unknown antiquity and the rise of history. "I have therefore determined," he says, "to bestow the telling over even of these reputed tales, be it for nothing else but in favour of our English poets and rhetoricians, who by their art well know how to use them judiciously."

This labour was interrupted by the great event of Milton's life. A political and spiritual despotism had terminated with the life of the treacherous and misguided Charles I.; and England had entered on that brief period of renovation which had been hailed by Milton with the enthusiasm we have seen animating his eloquence. The executive government under the republic was committed to a council of state, consisting of thirty-eight members of the legislature; and as the diplomatic correspondence of Europe was then conducted in Latin, it became necessary to appoint a foreign secretary, who combined with other qualifications of the highest order, the most familiar acquaintance with that language. Among the many wise measures by which this period was rendered memorable, the appointment of Milton to this office was one of the most important. The date of the Commonwealth has often been indicated as the culminating point of England's greatness. This has been popularly attributed in a great measure to the administrative genius of Cromwell; but it is impossible not to believe that the intellectual and moral majesty of Milton contributed materially to the boasted pre-eminence of this country in the scale and the homage of contemporary nations.

It is difficult to characterize Milton's Letters of State in terms of extravagant eulogy. Uncorrupted with the finesse of vulgar diplomacy, they are instinct with a philanthropy

which extends its embrace far beyond the conventional limits of nationality, and in imitation of the Divine benignity recognizes the brotherhood of mankind. Their style is stamped with a majesty that fully represents the mightiest of earthly empires, and with that pacific courtesy, with that tender care for the oppressed, and that profound recognition of the King of kings, which are the most glorious insignia of imperial sway. Happy will it be for this country when these productions shall be revered by its rulers, as the great ensamples of national behaviour.

It is obvious that these productions of Milton's pen do not admit of an analysis; a selection, therefore, from a few of the most characteristic letters, must suffice to exhibit the poet, the polemic, and the patriot in the new phase of the statesman. The following letter, written by Milton in the name of the Protector, to Gustavus of Sweden, affords a specimen of the conciliatory spirit infused by Milton into the foreign intercourse of his government :—

“OLIVER, *Protector of the Commonwealth of ENGLAND, &c., to the most Serene Prince CHARLES GUSTAVUS, King of the SWEDES, GOTHs, and VANDALS.*

“Most Serene King, our dearest Friend and Confederate,—

“BEING assured of your majesty's concurrence both in thoughts and counsels for the defence of the Protestant faith against the enemies of it, if ever, now at this time most dangerously vexatious; though we cannot but rejoice at your prosperous success, and the daily tidings of your victories, yet on the other side we cannot but be as deeply afflicted, to meet with one thing that disturbs and interrupts our joy; we mean the bad news intermixed with so many welcome tidings, that the ancient friendship between your majesty and the States of the United Provinces looks with a dubious aspect, and that the mischief is exasperated to that height, especially in the Baltic Sea, as seems to bode an unhappy rupture. We confess ourselves ignorant of the causes; but we too easily foresee, that the events, which

God avert, will be fatal to the interests of the Protestants. And therefore, as well in respect to that most strict alliance between us and your majesty, as out of that affection and love to the reformed religion, by which we all of us ought chiefly to be swayed, we thought it our duty, as we have most earnestly exhorted the States of the United Provinces to peace and moderation, so now to persuade your majesty to the same. The Protestants have enemies everywhere, enow and to spare, inflamed with inexorable revenge; they never were known to have conspired more perniciously to our destruction: witness the valleys of Piedmont, still reeking with the blood and slaughter of the miserable; witness Austria, lately turmoiled with the emperor's edicts and proscriptions; witness Switzerland. But to what purpose is it, in many words to call back the bitter lamentations and remembrance of so many calamities? Who so ignorant, as not to know, that the counsels of the Spaniards, and the Roman pontiff, for these two years have filled all these places with conflagrations, slaughter, and vexation of the orthodox? If to these mischiefs there should happen an access of dissension among Protestant brethren, more especially between two potent states, upon whose courage, wealth, and fortitude, so far as human strength may be relied upon, the support and hopes of all the reformed churches depend; of necessity the Protestant religion must be in great jeopardy, if not upon the brink of destruction. On the other side, if the whole Protestant name would but observe perpetual peace among themselves with that same brotherly union as becomes their profession, there would be no occasion to fear, what all the artifices or puissance of our enemies could do to hurt us which our fraternal concord and harmony alone would easily repel and frustrate. And therefore we most earnestly request and beseech your majesty, to harbour in your mind propitious thoughts of peace, and inclinations ready bent to repair the breaches of your pristine friendship with the United Provinces, if in any part it

may have accidentally suffered the decays of mistakes or misconstruction. If there be anything wherein our labour, our fidelity, and diligence may be useful toward this composition, we offer and devote all to your service. And may the God of heaven favour and prosper your noble and pious resolutions, which, together with all felicity, and a perpetual course of victory, we cordially wish to your majesty.

“Your majesty’s most affectionate,

“OLIVER, Protector of the Commonwealth
of England, &c.

“*From our Palace at Westminster, Aug. —, 1656.*”*

It was during the foreign administration of Milton that Immanuel, Duke of Savoy, commenced against the Vaudois or Waldenses one of the most cruel religious persecutions that have raged in modern times. Its victims were an inoffensive and devout community, settled for ages in the valleys of Piedmont, and there preserving, amidst the surrounding darkness of Popish superstition, the light of uncorrupted Christianity. Though holding the same fundamental doctrines which the Protestants had embraced, they cannot be classed under the same religious denomination, seeing that they never dissented from the Papacy, but claimed, and in all probability with truth, to be the hereditary representatives of the apostolic Church originally founded in Rome. Instigated by ecclesiastical advisers, the duke resolved on the extermination of this innocent community, and issued an edict for this purpose, the effect of which was speedily felt in massacre, torture, and famine. The intelligence of these sufferings at once aroused the indignation of Cromwell and Milton, and the result was the following temperate and admirable letter to the author of the calamity:—

“OLIVER, *the Protector, &c., to the most Serene Prince, IMMANUEL, Duke of SAVOY, Prince of Piedmont, Greeting.*

“Most Serene Prince,—

“LETTERS have been sent us from Geneva, as also from

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 282, 283.

the Dauphinate, and many other places bordering upon your territories, wherein we are given to understand, that such of your royal highness's subjects as profess the reformed religion, are commanded by your edict, and by your authority, within three days after the promulgation of your edict, to depart their native seats and habitations, upon pain of capital punishment, and forfeiture of all their fortunes and estates, unless they will give security to relinquish their religion within twenty days, and embrace the Roman Catholic faith. And that when they applied themselves to your royal highness in a most suppliant manner, imploring a revocation of the said edict, and that, being received into pristine favour, they might be restored to the liberty granted them by your predecessors, a part of your army fell upon them, most cruelly slew several, put others in chains, and compelled the rest to fly into desert places, and to the mountains covered with snow, where some hundreds of families are reduced to such distress, that it is greatly to be feared, they will in a short time all miserably perish through cold and hunger. These things, when they were related to us, we could not choose but be touched with extreme grief and compassion for the sufferings and calamities of this afflicted people. Now in regard we must acknowledge ourselves linked together not only by the same tie of humanity, but by joint communion of the same religion, we thought it impossible for us to satisfy our duty to God, to brotherly charity, or our profession of the same religion, if we should only be affected with a bare sorrow for the misery and calamity of our brethren, and not contribute all our endeavours to relieve and succour them in their unexpected adversity, as much as in us lies. Therefore in a greater measure we most earnestly beseech and conjure your royal highness, that you would call back to your thoughts the moderation of your most serene predecessors, and the liberty by them granted and confirmed from time to time to their subjects the Vaudois. In granting and confirming which, as they

did that which without all question was most grateful to God, who has been pleased to reserve the jurisdiction and power over the conscience to himself alone, so there is no doubt, but that they had a due consideration of their subjects also, whom they found stout and most faithful in war, and always obedient in peace. And as your royal serenity in other things most laudably follows the footsteps of your immortal ancestors, so we again and again beseech your royal highness not to swerve from the path wherein they trod in this particular; but that you would vouchsafe to abrogate both this edict, and whatsoever else may be decreed to the disturbance of your subjects upon the account of the reformed religion; that you would ratify to them their conceded privileges and pristine liberty, and command their losses to be repaired, and that an end be put to their oppressions. Which if your royal highness shall be pleased to see performed, you will do a thing most acceptable to God, revive and comfort the miserable in dire calamity, and most highly oblige all your neighbours, that profess the reformed religion; but more especially ourselves, who shall be bound to look upon your clemency and benignity toward your subjects as the fruit of our earnest solicitation. Which will both engage us to a reciprocal return to all good offices, and lay the solid foundations not only of establishing, but increasing, alliance and friendship between this republic and your dominions. Nor do we less promise this to ourselves from your justice and moderation; to which we beseech Almighty God to incline your mind and thoughts. And so we cordially implore just Heaven to bestow upon your highness and your people the blessings of peace and truth, and prosperous success in all your affairs.

*"Whitehall, May —, 1655."**

The mingled wisdom and tact exhibited in this communication need not be pointed out to any one who considers the relative position of the two governments. It was quickly

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 249—251.

followed by similar letters addressed to the principal European powers; some of which demonstrate, that this tenderness of sympathy and moderation of manner did not lack the support of the stern resolution of Cromwell, and the magnanimity and decision of the Secretary of State. To the Prince of Transylvania he writes,—“After fame had reported to us your egregious merits and labours, undertaken in behalf of the Christian republic, when you were pleased that all these things, and what you have further in your thoughts to do in the defence and for promoting the Christian interest, should be in friendly manner imparted to us by letters from yourself, this afforded us a more plentiful occasion of joy and satisfaction, to hear that God, in those remoter regions, had raised up to himself so potent and renowned a minister of his glory and providence: and that this great minister of heaven, so famed for his courage and success, should be desirous to associate with us in the common defence of the Protestant religion, at this time wickedly assailed by words and deeds. Nor is it to be questioned but that God, who has infused into us both, though separated by such a spacious interval of many climates, the same desires and thoughts of defending the orthodox religion, will be our instructor and author of the ways and means whereby we may be assistant and useful to ourselves and the rest of the reformed cities; provided we watch all opportunities, that God shall put into our hands, and be not wanting to lay hold of them. In the mean time we cannot without an extreme and penetrating sorrow forbear putting your highness in mind how unmercifully the Duke of Savoy has persecuted his own subjects, professing the orthodox faith, in certain valleys, at the feet of the Alps.”*

After detailing as he does, in all his letters on this subject, the sufferings of the persecuted Waldenses, he adds,—“These things, as they have already been related to your highness, so we readily assure ourselves that so much cruelty

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 251.

cannot but be grievously displeasing to your ears, and that you will not be wanting to afford your aid and succour to those miserable wretches, if there be any that survive so many slaughters and calamities. For our parts we have written to the Duke of Savoy, beseeching him to remove his incensed anger from his subjects; as also to the King of France, that he would vouchsafe to do the same; and, lastly, to the princes of the reformed religion, to the end they might understand our sentiments concerning so fell and savage a piece of cruelty. Which, though first begun upon those poor and helpless people, however threatens all that profess the same religion, and therefore imposes upon all a greater necessity of providing for themselves in general, and consulting the common safety; which is the course that we shall always follow, as God shall be pleased to direct us.”*

His appeal to Gustavus of Sweden is in a bolder tone:—“Now there is nobody can be ignorant that the kings of the Swedes have always joined with the reformed, carrying their victorious arms into Germany in defence of the Protestants without distinction. Therefore we make it our chief request, and that in a more especial manner to your majesty, that you would solicit the Duke of Savoy by letters; and, by interposing your intermediating authority, endeavour to avert the horrid cruelty of this edict, if possible, from people no less innocent than religious. For we think it superfluous to admonish your majesty whither these rigorous beginnings tend, and what they threaten to all the Protestants in general. But if he rather choose to listen to his anger, than to our joint entreaties and intercessions; if there be any tie, any charity or communion of religion to be believed and worshipped, upon consultations duly first communicated to your majesty, and the chief of the Protestant princes, some other course is to be speedily taken, that such a numerous multitude of our innocent brethren may not

miserably perish for want of succour and assistance. Which, in regard we make no question but that it is your majesty's opinion and determination, there can be nothing in our opinion more prudently resolved, than to join our reputation, authority, counsels, forces, and whatever else is needful, with all the speed that may be, in pursuance of so pious a design. In the mean time, we beseech Almighty God to bless your majesty."*

Without any direct denunciation of war, he adopts a similar tone towards other states. His letter to Holland closes with the following words:—"We are ready to take such other course and counsels with yourselves, in common with the rest of our reformed friends and confederates, as may be most necessary for the preservation of just and good men, upon the brink of inevitable ruin; and to make the duke himself sensible that we can no longer neglect the heavy oppressions and calamities of our orthodox brethren."†

To the Protestant cantons of Switzerland he says, referring to the duke,—“But if his mind be obstinately bent to other determinations, we are ready to communicate our consultations with yours, by what most prevalent means to relieve and re-establish most innocent men, and our most dearly beloved brethren in Christ, tormented and overlaid with so many wrongs and oppressions, and preserve them from inevitable and undeserved ruin. Of whose welfare and safety, as I am assured, that you, according to your wonted piety, are most cordially tender; so, for our own parts, we cannot but in our opinion prefer their preservation before our most important interests, even the safeguard of our own life.”‡

Of the King of France he especially requests, “that you will afford a secure sanctuary and shelter within your kingdom to all those miserable exiles that shall fly to your majesty for protection, and that you will not give permission to any of your subjects to assist the Duke of Savoy to their prejudice.”

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 253.

+ Ibid. p. 255.

‡ Ibid. p. 256.

To Frederick III., King of Denmark, he proposes co-operation in a more active resistance. And to the Senate of Geneva, as being nearest to the scene of persecution, he transmits two thousand pounds, not from the national revenue, but wisely raised by voluntary subscription, to be distributed by them, for the immediate relief of the sufferers.

It has been already observed, that the inner and more private feelings of Milton's mind found their expression in his sonnets. One of these is devoted to the sufferings of these persecuted Christians, and affords a further indication of the deep sympathy he felt in their wrongs.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT.

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones
 Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;
 Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
 When all our fathers worship'd stocks and stones,
 Forget not: in thy book record their groans
 Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
 Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that roll'd
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
 The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
 To Heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow
 O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
 The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
 A hundred fold; who having learn'd thy way,
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe."

These tender and generous sentiments, justify the love which mingles with our admiration of this incomparable man. His political writings, less applicable to days of constitutional rule and popular freedom, may be regarded indeed as models of eloquent composition, but in other respects comparatively as historic curiosities. His ecclesiastical writings will be coeval with the Christianity which they illustrate; and his letters of state will grow in esteem with the growth of Britain in freedom and moral elevation, and will ever be looked back upon as contributing no insignificant rays to the effulgence that halos this precious

period of our national history. The annals of that era are illuminated with names consecrated to the homage of posterity, by the various claims of genius, piety, and learning,—Newton and Barrow, Baxter, Taylor, and Bunyan, Hobbes, Clarendon, and South, but the name of Milton will fix the gaze of all ages as the cynosure of that bright constellation.

CHAPTER XII.

PUBLICATION OF THE EIKON BASILIKE—AUTHORSHIP OF THE EIKON—
MILTON REPLIES IN THE EIKONOKLASTES—PUBLICATION OF THE
ROYAL DEFENCE BY SALMASIUS—MILTON REPLIES IN HIS FIRST
DEFENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND—DESCRIPTION OF THE
WORK AND OF ITS EFFECTS—THE MOST STRIKING PASSAGES FROM
THE DEFENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND.

MILTON'S respite from the warfare of controversy was destined to be of short duration. The Presbyterians, hostile to the Parliament on account of the sentiments of religious liberty with which they were animated, were availing themselves of the feelings awakened by the execution of Charles to deepen disaffection to the government. Their efforts were seconded from an unexpected quarter. A book was published which purported to be the production of the king, and bore the Greek title, "Eikon Basilikè, the Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings." So great was the curiosity excited by this book, which was then supposed to have been really written by Charles the First in his own defence, that forty-seven editions of it, amounting to forty-eight thousand five hundred copies, were disposed of in a single year. The Parliament were naturally apprehensive lest the effect of this should be to interrupt the peace and prosperity which, under their auspices, were beginning to be re-established. They therefore intrusted to

Milton the task of exposing and confuting the mis-statements and sophisms it contained.

Milton's reply was entitled "Eikonoklastes," the selection of which name he thus explains:—"In one thing I must commend his openness, who gave the title to this book, *Εικὼν Βασιλική*, that is to say, The King's Image; and by the shrine he dresses out for him, certainly would have the people come and worship him. For which reason this answer also is entitled, 'Eikonoklastes,' the famous surname of many Greek emperors, who, in their zeal to the command of God, after long tradition of idolatry in the church, took courage and broke all superstitious images to pieces."*

Respecting the authorship of the "Eikon," there seems but little room for reasonable doubt. The multitudes who bought and devoured it on its first appearance doubtless regarded it as the genuine production of Charles; and Dr. South, in one of his Sermons on the Anniversary of the King's Execution, gives a somewhat fantastic reason for the same belief, viz. that no one else could have written it. "For," he adds, "it is composed with such an unfailing majesty of diction, that it seems to have been written rather with a sceptre than a pen." There is abundant proof that it was the production of one Dr. Gauden. This, however, was not demonstrated until after the Restoration, though Milton, in several passages, shows that his sagacity was not imposed upon by the forgery. Nevertheless, he follows his antagonist closely, chapter by chapter, through every stage of Charles's reign, laying open the falsity of his historical statements and suppressions, and driving away his sanctimonious pretensions before a storm of indignant satire. Notwithstanding this, Milton affirmed with perfect truth, "I did not insult over fallen majesty, as is pretended. I only preferred Queen Truth to King Charles. The charge of insult, which I foresaw that the malevolent would urge,

* Prose Works, vol. i. p. 313.

I was at some pains to remove in the beginning of the work ; and so often as possible in other places.”

The passage to which he here more particularly refers, is the opening paragraph of the book, which, as exemplifying the dignified feeling with which he entered on this painful service, should be presented in this place. It is as follows:—
“To descant on the misfortunes of a person fallen from so high a dignity, who hath also paid his final debt both to nature and his faults, is neither of itself a thing commendable, nor the intention of this discourse. Neither was it fond ambition, nor the vanity to get a name, present or with posterity, by writing against a king. I never was so thirsty after fame, nor so destitute of other hopes and means, better and more certain to attain it; for kings have gained glorious titles from their favourers by writing against private men, as Henry VIII. did against Luther; but no man ever gained much honour by writing against a king, as not usually meeting with that force of argument in such courtly antagonists, which to convince might add to his reputation. Kings most commonly, though strong in legions, are but weak at argument; as they who ever have accustomed from their cradle to use their will only as their right hand, their reason always as their left. Whence unexpectedly constrained to that kind of combat, they prove but weak and puny adversaries: nevertheless, for their sakes, who through custom, simplicity, or want of better teaching, have not more seriously considered kings, than in the gaudy name of majesty, and admire them and their doings, as if they breathed not the same breath with other mortal men, I shall make no scruple to take up (for it seems to be the challenge both of him and all his party) to take up this gauntlet, though a king’s, in the behalf of liberty and the commonwealth.”*

The “Eikonoklastes” was re-edited by Richard Baron, in 1756, who prefaced it with a brief dissertation, written with

* Prose Works, vol. i. p. 307, 308.

great earnestness, and commending the work to the special study of his countrymen. With reference to the mere composition he says:—"The great Milton has a style of his own, one fit to express the astonishing sublimity of his thoughts, the mighty vigour of his spirit, and that *copia* of invention, that redundancy of imagination, which no writer before or since hath equalled. In some places, it is confessed, that his periods are too long, which renders him intricate, if not altogether unintelligible, to vulgar readers; but these places are not many. In the book before us his style is for the most part free and easy, and it abounds both in eloquence, and wit, and argument. I am of opinion, that the style of this work is the best and most perfect of all his prose writings." On the same subject, Mr. St. John remarks, with his usual discrimination,—“The ‘Eikonoklastes’ abounds in passages of peculiar sweetness and harmony—in short sentences—abrupt transitions—interrogations—unrounded periods, purposely introduced where the most consummate art would have them placed, to break up the surface of the style, and banish monotony. But why need I dwell on the mere mechanism of his language? Though frequently attentive to this point, he trusted—too much perhaps—to other beauties, of a higher kind, inasmuch as what delights the intellect must be superior to what only charms the ear; and instead of periods, turned with unrivalled skill, unfolds before the mental eye a style glowing with imagery, animated, vehement, instinct in all its parts with life.”

The structure of this work, consisting as it does of twenty-eight historical chapters, does not admit of a concise analysis, and the notice already bestowed upon it must therefore suffice.

The interest excited by the “Eikon Basilikè,” and not less, perhaps, the triumphant power of the “Eikonoklastes,” stimulated the exiled Prince Charles still further to attempt the conciliation of the sympathies of his country to the

fortunes of the deposed house. With this view he applied to Claude De Saumaise, better known by his Latinized name of Salmasius, then a professor in the University of Leyden, to undertake the cause of British royalty. The application was accompanied with a present of a hundred jacobuses, which probably had far less influence in determining the decision of the professor than the honour of advocating the cause of the heir apparent to the throne of England. At all events, in an evil hour he acceded to the proposal. Salmasius was a man of extensive and curious learning, but of essential littleness of character, and of egregious and importunate vanity; as the result of both he was insolent and pedantic. Had he never been drawn into this controversy, he would have only survived in the prying interest of the book-worm; as it is, he is immortalized like Icarus, and will be coeval with Milton as a captive chained to the triumphant chariot of his fame.

The work of Salmasius was published in the Latin language, and was entitled "A Royal Defence, addressed to Charles II., on behalf of Charles I." It was deemed necessary by the Council of State that this production should be replied to in the name of the Commonwealth, and Milton was again summoned forth to defend the liberties of his country. His reply, entitled "A Defence of the People of England," is the work by which he was best known to contemporary European states, and which of all his prose writings is still the one most popularly associated with his name. It is one of the noblest efforts of the human mind, displaying the unexampled combination of patriotism without nationality, religious independence without bigotry, erudition without pedantry, and severity without malice. In the conscious and excited power of his genius, he paralyses his victim with the shock of argument, dwindles him to insignificance by dignity of demeanour, holds him up by his wit to the ridicule of the world, lashes him with his satire, and finally slays him with his

eloquence, and buries him beneath a tumulus of learning. This terrible overthrow, combined with the manifest appreciation of it by Queen Christina of Sweden, whose previous favours towards him, passed, as has been suspected, the bounds of modesty, is said to have cost Salmasius his life, and certainly involved a sacrifice to Milton far more deplored by posterity than the death of any court parasite, whether domestic or foreign.

Unfortunately for Salmasius, his seduction by Charles II. involved the sin of political apostasy, and thus placed the previous writings of the hired advocate at the disposal of Milton, as an arsenal of poisoned weapons. Of these he avails himself with unsparing fidelity. It has already been shown how deeply ecclesiastical politics entered into the great question at issue; and as Salmasius had already publicly committed himself, Milton demolishes in his preface all the courtly adulations in which the future monarch is promised a spiritual as well as a political ascendancy, by quoting his own words against him:—"There are most weighty reasons why the church ought to lay aside episcopacy, and return to the apostolical institution of presbyters: that a far greater mischief has been introduced into the church by episcopacy, than the schisms themselves were, which were before apprehended: that the plague which episcopacy introduced, depressed the whole body of the church under a miserable tyranny: nay, had put a yoke even upon the necks of kings and princes: that it would be more beneficial to the church, if the whole hierarchy itself were extirpated, than if the pope only, who is the head of it, were laid aside."*

In subsequently pursuing the same argument, in its more general aspect, he is naturally led to animadvert on the principles of the Presbyterians, which virtually coincided with the despotic dogmas of his chief antagonist. "They now complain," he says, "that the sectaries are not extirpated;

* Prose Works, vol. i. p. 13.

which is a most absurd thing to expect the magistrates should be able to do, who never yet were able, do what they could, to extirpate avarice and ambition, those two most pernicious heresies, and more destructive to the church than all the rest, out of the very order and tribe of the ministers themselves. For the sects which they inveigh against, I confess there are such amongst us; but they are obscure, and make no noise in the world: the sects that they are of, are public and notorious, and much more dangerous to the church of God. Simon Magus and Diotrephes were the ringleaders of them. Yet are we so far from persecuting these men, though they are pestilent enough, that though we know them to be ill-affected to the government, and desirous of and endeavouring to work a change, we allow them but too much liberty.”*

The necessities of the case drove Salmasius to commit himself, without reservation, to the dogma of the Divine right of kings, an absurdity which we have subsequently been taught, by no mean ecclesiastical authority,† to identify with the Divine right of policemen and parish beadle. The essence of Milton’s arguments, pursued throughout this treatise against this doctrine, may be thus concisely stated:—Civil government is indeed a Divine ordination, and as such demands a universal homage; but its claims are regulated by the same fundamental moral principles which bind the duties of subjects, and control individual action; that the powers that be, varying as they do with the vicissitudes of circumstance, are not to be regarded as individuals, but as functions subsisting under the conditions of unalterable law; that both parties in the social compact are bound by the same cardinal obligations, and that their claims and duties are strictly correlative. The violation of all laws, human and Divine, on the part of the first Charles, drove Salmasius for mere shelter to the doctrine of Divine right of kings; and the same melancholy history supplied Milton with the aptest illustration of the

* Prose Works, vol. i. p. 27.

† Archdeacon Paley.

great principle he maintained. "If," he says, "whatever a king has a mind to do, the right of kings will bear him out in, (which was a lesson that the bloody tyrant, Antoninus Caracalla, though his step-mother Julia preached it to him, and endeavoured to inure him to the practice of it, by making him commit incest with herself, yet could hardly suck in,) then there neither is, nor ever was, that king, that deserved the name of a tyrant. They may safely violate all the laws of God and man: their very being kings keeps them innocent. What crime was ever any of them guilty of? They did but make use of their own right upon their own vassals. No king can commit such horrible cruelties and outrages, as will not be within this right of kings. So that there is no pretence left for any complaints or expostulations with any of them. And dare you assert, that 'this right of kings,' as you call it, 'is grounded upon the law of nations, or rather upon that of nature,' you brute beast? for you deserve not the name of a man, that are so cruel and unjust towards all those of your own kind; that endeavour, as much as in you lies, so to bear down and vilify the whole race of mankind, that were made after the image of God, as to assert and maintain those cruel and unmerciful taskmasters, that through the superstitious whimsies, or sloth, or treachery of some persons, get into the chair, are provided and appointed by Nature herself, that mild and gentle mother of us all, to be the governors of those nations they enslave. By which pestilent doctrine of yours, having rendered them more fierce and untractable, you not only enable them to make havoc of, and trample under foot, their miserable subjects; but endeavour to arm them for that very purpose with the law of nature, the right of kings, and the very constitutions of government, than which nothing can be more impious or ridiculous."* And so again, "Bad kings indeed, though to cast some terror into people's minds, and beget a reverence of themselves, they declare to the world,

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 31, 32.

that God only is the author of kingly government; in their hearts and minds they reverence no other deity but that of Fortune, according to that passage in Horace :

‘Te Dacus asper, te profugi Scythæ,
Regumque matres barbarorum, et
Purpurei metuunt tyranni.
Injurioso ne pede proruas
Stantem columnam, neu populus frequens
Ad arma cessantes, ad arma
Concitet, imperiumque frangat.’

“So that if it is by God that kings now-a-days reign, it is by God too that the people assert their own liberty; since all things are of him and by him. I am sure the Scripture bears witness to both; that by him kings reign, and that by him they are cast down from their thrones. And yet experience teaches us, that both these things are brought about by the people, oftener than by God. Be this right of kings, therefore, what it may, the right of the people is as much from God as it. And whenever any people, without some visible designation of God himself, appoint a king over them, they have the same right to put him down, that they had to set him up at first. And certainly it is a more godlike action to depose a tyrant than to set up one: and there appears much more of God in the people, when they depose an unjust prince, than in a king that oppresses an innocent people. Nay the people have a warrant from God to judge wicked princes; for God has conferred this very honour upon those that are dear to him, that, celebrating the praises of Christ their own king, ‘they shall bind in chains the kings of the nations,’ (under which appellation all tyrants under the gospel are included,) ‘and execute the judgments written upon them that challenge to themselves an exemption from all written laws,’ *Psa. cxlix.* So that there is but little reason left for that wicked and foolish opinion, that kings, who commonly are the worst of men, should be so high in God’s account, as that he should have put the world under them, to be at their beck, and be governed

according to their humour; and that for their sakes alone he should have reduced all mankind, whom he made after his own image, into the same condition with brutes.”*

These principles he fortifies according to his custom, not only by numerous quotations from classical literature, but by passages adduced with much reverence from the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, and adds to these, illustrations from the history of the middle ages, which exhibit an almost oppressive amount of erudition. These he intersperses with such withering denunciations of the base servility of his opponent, as no reader in the present day can regard but as blemishes on this incomparable performance, and ever and anon with reminiscent allusions to the circumstances of his own country, of singular power and beauty. Of these the following, occurring in the midst of an historical dissertation, may be taken as an example:—
“Certainly if nature teaches us rather to endure the government of a king, though he be never so bad, than to endanger the lives of a great many men in the recovery of our liberty; it must teach us likewise not only to endure a kingly government, which is the only one that you argue ought to be submitted to, but even an aristocracy and a democracy: nay, and sometimes it will persuade us, to submit to a multitude of highwaymen, and to slaves that mutiny. Fulvius and Rupilius, if your principles had been received in their days, must not have engaged in the servile war (as their writers call it) after the Prætorian armies were slain; Crassus must not have marched against Spartacus, after the rebels had destroyed one Roman army, and spoiled their tents; nor must Pompey have undertaken the Piratic war. But the state of Rome must have pursued the dictates of nature, and must have submitted to their own slaves, or to the pirates, rather than run the hazard of losing some men’s lives. You do not prove at all, that nature has imprinted any such notion as this of yours on the minds of men: and yet you

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 47—49.

cannot forbear boding us ill luck, and denouncing the wrath of God against us, (which may heaven divert, and inflict it upon yourself, and all such prognosticators as you!) who have punished as he deserved, one that had the name of our king, but was in fact our implacable enemy; and we have made atonement for the death of so many of our countrymen, as our civil wars have occasioned, by shedding his blood, that was the author and cause of them.”* And again, in commenting on the expressed desire of Salmasius to see the secular domination of bishops re-established in England, he vents his indignation in the following language:—“O villain! have some regard at least to your own conscience; remember before it be too late, if at least this admonition of mine come not too late,—remember that this mocking the Holy Spirit of God is an inexpressible crime, and will not be left unpunished. Stop at last, and set bounds to your fury, lest the wrath of God lay hold upon you suddenly, for endeavouring to deliver the flock of God, his anointed ones that are not to be touched, to enemies and cruel tyrants, to be crushed and trampled on again, from whom himself by a high and stretched-out arm had so lately delivered them; and from whom you yourself maintained that they ought to be delivered, I know not whether for any good of theirs, or in order to the hardening of your own heart, and to further your own damnation. If the bishops have no right to lord it over the church, certainly much less have kings, whatever the laws of men may be to the contrary. For they that know anything of the gospel know thus much, that the government of the church is altogether Divine and spiritual, and no civil constitution.”†

The “Defence of the People of England” concludes with the following noble exhortation:—“And now I think, through God’s assistance, I have finished the work I undertook, to wit, the defence of the noble actions of my countrymen at home and abroad, against the raging and envious madness

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 118, 119.

† Ibid. pp. 180, 181.

of this distracted sophister ; and the asserting of the common rights of the people against the unjust domination of kings, not out of any hatred to kings, but tyrants: nor have I purposely left unanswered any one argument alleged by my adversary, nor any one example or authority quoted by him, that seemed to have any force in it, or the least colour of an argument. Perhaps I have been guilty rather of the other extreme, of replying to some of his fooleries and trifles, as if they were solid arguments, and thereby may seem to have attributed more to them than they deserved. One thing yet remains to be done, which perhaps is of the greatest concern of all, and that is, that you, my countrymen, refute this adversary of yours yourselves, which I do not see any other means of your effecting, than by a constant endeavour to outdo all men's bad words by your own good deeds. When you laboured under more sorts of oppression than one, you betook yourselves to God for refuge, and he was graciously pleased to hear your most earnest prayer and desires. He has gloriously delivered you, the first of nations, from the two greatest mischiefs of this life, and most pernicious to virtue, tyranny, and superstition ; he has endued you with greatness of mind to be the first of mankind, who after having conquered their own king, and having had him delivered into their hands, have not scrupled to condemn him judicially, and, pursuant to that sentence of condemnation, to put him to death. After the performing so glorious an action as this, you ought to do nothing that is mean and little, not so much as to think of, much less to do, anything but what is great and sublime. Which to attain to, this is your only way: as you have subdued your enemies in the field, so to make appear, that unarmed, and in the highest outward peace and tranquillity, you of all mankind are best able to subdue ambition, avarice, the love of riches, and can best avoid the corruptions that prosperity is apt to introduce (which generally subdue and triumph over other nations,) to show as great justice, temperance, and moderation in the

maintaining your liberty, as you have shown courage in freeing yourselves from slavery. These are the only arguments, by which you will be able to evince, that you are not such persons as this fellow represents you—traitors, robbers, murderers, parricides, madmen; that you did not put your king to death out of any ambitious design, or a desire of invading the rights of others; not out of any seditious principles or sinister ends; that it was not an act of fury or madness; but that it was wholly out of love to your liberty, your religion, to justice, virtue, and your country, that you punished a tyrant. But if it should fall out otherwise, (which God forbid); if as you have been valiant in war, you should grow debauched in peace, you that have had such visible demonstrations of the goodness of God to yourselves, and his wrath against your enemies; and that you should not have learned by so eminent, so remarkable an example before your eyes, to fear God, and work righteousness; for my part, I shall easily grant and confess (for I cannot deny it), whatever ill men may speak or think of you, to be very true. And you will find in a little time, that God's displeasure against you will be greater than it has been against your adversaries, greater than his grace and favour has been to yourselves, which you have had larger experience of than any other nation under heaven.”*

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 212, 213.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOMESTIC CHANGES—BIRTH OF TWO CHILDREN TO MILTON—DEATH OF HIS WIFE—SUFFERS THE LOSS OF SIGHT—HIS LETTER TO LEONARDI PHILARAS, THE ATHENIAN, DETAILING THE HISTORY OF THE DISEASE—HIS MAGNANIMITY AND PIOUS RESIGNATION—SONNET ON HIS BLINDNESS—HIS SECOND MARRIAGE, AND SECOND BEREAVEMENT OF HIS WIFE AND HER INFANT CHILD—SONNET ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

THE "Defence of the People of England," written as it was in Latin, was received with unbounded admiration by the learned world, both at home and abroad. The most eminent men of the Continent, imbued with the growing spirit of freedom, showered their praises upon the conqueror of *Salmasius*, and all the ambassadors of foreign states in London waited upon him, to offer the tribute of their congratulation.

It is necessary now to revert to Milton's private history. On his appointment to the office of Foreign Secretary, he removed to a lodging at Charing Cross, and subsequently to apartments in Scotland-yard. Here his family was increased by the birth of a son, who died in his infancy, on the 16th of March, 1650. In 1652 he took a residence in Petty France, a site now occupied by Charles Street, Westminster, where he resided for eight years, till the crisis of the Restoration;—a handsome house opening into St. James's Park, and adjoining to the mansion of Lord Scudamore. On the 2nd of May, in this year, his wife gave birth to his third daughter, Deborah, and died in her confinement.

The eyesight of Milton had been defective from a very early period in his life. He himself states, in one of the

brief snatches of autobiography which occur in his prose writings, that it had received a lasting injury from the studies which he was suffered to prosecute at night, when not more than ten or twelve years of age. When he was called upon to write his "Defence of the People of England," he was distinctly warned by his physicians, that the prosecution of his design would involve the inevitable loss of his sight. To this condition he deliberately submitted, and the result unhappily justified the predictions of his medical advisers. The precise time at which he lost his sight is not ascertained,—a fact which is the less remarkable, as the decay of the organ was in all probability gradual. His own notices of the event, however, constitute a most interesting portion of his biography.

Among the distinguished men who sought the honour of his friendship, after the publication of his "Defence of the People of England," was Lecnardi Philaras, then ambassador from the Duke of Parma to the Court of Paris. This gentleman having recommended, in a letter to Milton, the services of Thevenot, an eminent oculist in Paris, Milton addressed to him the following letter:—

"To LEONARD PHILARAS, *the Athenian*.

"I HAVE always been devotedly attached to the literature of Greece, and particularly to that of your Athens; and have never ceased to cherish the persuasion that that city would one day make me ample recompense for the warmth of my regard. The ancient genius of your renowned country has favoured the completion of my prophecy in presenting me with your friendship and esteem. Though I was known to you only by my writings, and we were removed to such a distance from each other, you most courteously addressed me by letter; and when you unexpectedly came to London, and saw me who could no longer see, my affliction, which causes none to regard me with greater admiration, and perhaps many even with feelings

of contempt, excited your tenderest sympathy and concern. You would not suffer me to abandon the hope of recovering my sight; and informed me that you had an intimate friend at Paris, Doctor Thevenot, who was particularly celebrated in disorders of the eyes, whom you would consult about mine, if I would enable you to lay before him the causes and symptoms of the complaint. I will do what you desire, lest I should seem to reject that aid which perhaps may be offered me by Heaven. It is now, I think, about ten years since I perceived my vision to grow weak and dull; and at the same time I was troubled with pain in my kidneys and bowels, accompanied with flatulency. In the morning, if I began to read, as was my custom, my eyes instantly ached intensely, but were refreshed after a little corporeal exercise. The candle which I looked at, seemed as it were encircled with a rainbow. Not long after, the sight in the left part of the left eye (which I lost some years before the other) became quite obscured, and prevented me from discerning any object on that side. The sight in my other eye has now been gradually and sensibly vanishing away for about three years. Some months before it had entirely perished, though I stood motionless, everything which I looked at seemed in motion to and fro. A stiff cloudy vapour seemed to have settled on my forehead and temples, which usually occasions a sort of somnolent pressure upon my eyes, and particularly from dinner till the evening. So that I often recollect what is said of the poet Phineas in the *Argonautics* :—

‘A stupor deep his cloudy temples bound,
And when he walk’d he seem’d as whirling round,
Or in a feeble trance he speechless lay.’

I ought not to omit that while I had any sight left, as soon as I lay down on my bed and turned on either side, a flood of light used to gush from my closed eyelids. Then, as my sight became daily more impaired, the colours became more faint, and were emitted with a certain inward crackling

sound ; but at present, every species of illumination being, as it were, extinguished, there is diffused around me nothing but darkness, or darkness mingled and streaked with an ashy brown. Yet the darkness in which I am perpetually immersed, seems always, both by night and day, to approach nearer to white than black ; and when the eye is rolling in its socket, it admits a little particle of light, as through a chink. And though your physician may kindle a small ray of hope, yet I make up my mind to the malady as quite incurable ; and I often reflect, that as the wise man admonishes, days of darkness are destined to each of us,—the darkness which I experience, less oppressive than that of the tomb, is, owing to the singular goodness of the Deity, passed amid the pursuits of literature and the cheering salutations of friendship. But if, as is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God,’ why may not any one acquiesce in the privation of his sight, when God has so amply furnished his mind and his conscience with eyes ? While he so tenderly provides for me, while he so graciously leads me by the hand and conducts me on the way, I will, since it is his pleasure, rather rejoice than repine at being blind. And, my dear Philaras, whatever may be the event, I wish you adieu with no less courage and composure than if I had the eyes of a lynx.

“ *Westminster, September 28, 1654.*”*

Nothing can be imagined more lofty or affecting than the occasional references to his loss of sight which are found in the later writings of Milton. The following occurs in his “Second Defence of the People of England:”—“Thus, therefore, when I was publicly solicited to write a reply to the Defence of the Royal Cause ; when I had to contend with the pressure of sickness, and with the apprehension of soon losing the sight of my remaining eye, and when my medical attendants clearly announced that if I did engage

* Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 507, 508.

in the work, it would be irreparably lost, their premonitions caused no hesitation and inspired no dismay. I would not have listened to the voice, even of Esculapius himself from the shrine of Epidaurus, in preference to the suggestions of the heavenly monitor within my breast: my resolution was unshaken, though the alternative was either the loss of my sight or the desertion of my duty, and I called to mind those two destinies which the oracle of Delphi announced to the son of Thetis:—

‘For, as the goddess spake who gave me birth,
Two fates attend me while I live on earth:
If fixed I combat by the Trojan wall,
Deathless my fame, but certain is my fall.
If I return, beneath my native sky
My days shall flourish long—my glory die.’

I considered that many had purchased a less good by a greater evil, the meed of glory by the loss of life; but that I might procure great good by little suffering; that though I am blind, I might still discharge the most honourable duties, the performance of which, as it is something more durable than glory, ought to be an object of superior admiration and esteem; I resolved, therefore, to make the short interval of sight which was left me to enjoy, as beneficial as possible to the public interest. Thus it is clear by what motives I was governed in the measures which I took, and the losses which I sustained. Let, then, the calumniators of the Divine goodness cease to revile, or to make me the object of their superstitious imaginations. Let them consider, that my situation, such as it is, is neither an object of my shame or my regret, that my resolutions are too firm to be shaken, that I am not depressed by any sense of the Divine displeasure; that, on the other hand, in the most momentous periods, I have had full experience of the Divine favour and protection; and that, in the solace and the strength which have been infused into me from above, I have been enabled to do the will of God; that I may oftener

think on what he has bestowed, than on what he has withheld; that, in short, I am unwilling to exchange my consciousness of rectitude with that of any other person; and that I feel the recollection a treasured store of tranquillity and delight. But, if the choice were necessary, I would, sir, prefer my blindness to yours; yours is a cloud spread over the mind, which darkens both the light of reason and of conscience; mine keeps from my view only the coloured surfaces of things, while it leaves me at liberty to contemplate the beauty and stability of virtue and of truth. How many things are there besides which I would not willingly see; how many which I must see against my will; and how few which I feel any anxiety to see! There is, as the apostle has remarked, a way to strength through weakness. Let me, then, be the most feeble creature alive, as long as that feebleness serves to invigorate the energies of my rational and immortal spirit; as long as in that obscurity in which I am enveloped, the light of the Divine presence more clearly shines—then, in proportion as I am weak, I shall be invincibly strong; and in proportion as I am blind, I shall more clearly see. O! that I may thus be perfected by feebleness, and irradiated by obscurity! And, indeed, in my blindness, I enjoy in no inconsiderable degree the favour of the Deity, who regards me with more tenderness and compassion in proportion as I am able to behold nothing but himself. Alas! for him who insults me, who maligns and merits public execration! For the Divine law not only shields me from injury, but almost renders me too sacred to attack; not indeed so much from the privation of my sight, as from the overshadowing of those heavenly wings which seem to have occasioned this obscurity; and which, when occasioned, he is wont to illuminate with an interior light, more precious and more pure. To this I ascribe the more tender assiduities of my friends, their soothing attentions, their kind visits, their reverential observances. . . . Thus, while both God and man unite

in solacing me under the weight of my affliction, let no one lament my loss of sight in so honourable a cause."*

These matchless effusions of magnanimity and piety shall conclude with two sonnets composed in the same lofty strain :—

TO CYRIAC SKINNER.

Cyriac! this three years' day, these eyes, though clear,
 To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
 Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot ;
 Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
 Of sun, or moon, or star throughout the year,
 Or man or woman ; yet I argue not
 Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
 Of heart or hope ; but still bear up and steer
 Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask ?
 The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
 In liberty's defence, my noble task,
 Of which all Europe rings from side to side ;
 This thought might lead me through the world's vain mask,
 Content, though blind, had I no better guide.

MILTON ON HIS BLINDNESS.

When I consider how my life is spent
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent which is death to hide
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, lest He, returning, chide ;
 "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied ?"
 I fondly ask ; but patience, to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies : God doth not need
 Either man's work, or his own gifts ; who best
 Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best ; His state
 Is kingly : thousands at His bidding speed,
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest :
 They also serve who only stand and wait.

The precise time at which Milton's disease arrived at the crisis which deprived him of sight, is not recorded ; but we

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 238, 239.

know that it was two years after that event that he married Catharine, daughter of Captain Woodcock. This union appears to have been productive of unalloyed but short-lived happiness. Within a year of her marriage, this lady gave birth to a daughter, and died in childbed, her infant child surviving her but a short time. Of this brief period of Milton's domestic history, we have no direct information; but every reader must be convinced of the depth of Milton's affection for his partner who peruses the following touching sonnet, inscribed

ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

Methought I saw my late espousèd saint,
Brought to me, like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint:
Mine, as whom, wash'd from spot of childbed taint,
Purification in the old law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in heaven without restraint:—
Came, vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was veil'd, yet, to my fancied sight,
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight;
But, O, as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked,—she fled, and day brought back my night!

CHAPTER XIV.

PUBLICATION OF THE "REGII SANGUINIS CLAMOR"—THE SECOND DEFENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND—CHARACTER OF THE PURITANS—EULOGY ON CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN—THE FIRST DEFENCE UNREWARDED WITH MONEY—VINDICATION OF THE PROTECTOR—EULOGY ON CROMWELL.

BEFORE the applause which had greeted Milton's "Defence of the People of England" had subsided, he was summoned by the Parliament to a second and similar exertion of his powers. The conspicuous defeat of Salmasius had deterred all men of similar pretensions to his, from assailing the British government, and defending the cause of the exiled house of Stuart. The latter party, therefore, availed themselves of the maxim of Celsus—*Fiat experimentum in corpore vili*—and put forward an obscure French clergyman, of the name of Dumoulin, who, to escape from the avenging Nemesis of British freedom, affiliated his venal work on a still more insignificant person, one Alexander More. It was entitled "Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Cœlum adversus Parricidas Anglicanos," or "The Cry of Royal Blood to Heaven against the English Parricides." More was of Scotch extraction, but was settled in France, and, owing to this entire controversy having been conducted in the then universal language of Europe, is better known by the Latinized name of Morus. His character was deeply soiled with moral and domestic turpitude; and the publication which he issued was filled with calumnious fabrications against Milton—to which

we are indebted for much of what we possess of his scanty autobiography—and with political sophisms and historical mis-statements which afforded little more than sport to the wit and learning of the statesman.

The opening of the Second Defence is stately and eloquent to the last degree:—"A grateful recollection of the Divine goodness is the first of human obligations; and extraordinary favours demand more solemn and devout acknowledgments. With such acknowledgments I feel it my duty to begin this work. First, because I was born at a time when the virtue of my fellow-citizens, far exceeding that of their progenitors in greatness of soul and vigour of enterprise, having invoked Heaven to witness the justice of their cause, and been clearly governed by its directions, has succeeded in delivering the commonwealth from the most grievous tyranny, and religion from the most ignominious degradation. And next, because, when there suddenly arose many who, as is usual with the vulgar, basely calumniated the most illustrious achievements; and when one, eminent above the rest, inflated with literary pride and the zealous applauses of his partisans, had, in a scandalous publication, which was particularly levelled against me, nefariously undertaken to plead the cause of despotism, I, who was neither deemed unequal to so renowned an adversary nor to so great a subject, was particularly selected by the deliverers of our country, and by the general suffrage of the public, openly to vindicate the rights of the English nation, and consequently of liberty itself. Lastly, because in a matter of so much moment, and which excited such ardent expectations, I did not disappoint the hopes nor the opinions of my fellow-citizens; while men of learning and eminence abroad honoured me with unmingled approbation; while I obtained such a victory over my opponent, that, notwithstanding his unparalleled assurance, he was obliged to quit the field with his courage broken and his reputation lost; and for the three years which he lived afterwards, much as he menaced and

furiously as he raved, he gave me no further trouble, except that he procured the paltry aid of some despicable hirelings, and suborned some of his silly and extravagant admirers to support him under the weight of the unexpected and recent disgrace which he had experienced. This will immediately appear. Such are the signal favours which I ascribe to the Divine beneficence, and which I thought it right devoutly to commemorate, not only that I might discharge a debt of gratitude, but particularly because they seem auspicious to the success of my present undertaking. For who is there who does not identify the honour of his country with his own? And what can conduce more to the beauty or glory of one's country, than the recovery, not only of its civil, but its religious liberty? And what nation or state ever obtained both by more successful or more valorous exertion? For fortitude is seen resplendent, not only in the field of battle and amid the clash of arms, but displays its energy under every difficulty and against every assailant. Those Greeks and Romans who are the objects of our admiration, employed hardly any other virtue in the extirpation of tyrants, than that love of liberty which made them prompt in seizing the sword, and gave them strength to use it. With facility they accomplished the undertaking, amid the general shout of praise and joy; nor did they engage in the attempt so much as an enterprise of perilous and doubtful issue, as in a contest the most glorious in which virtue could be signalized; which infallibly led to present recompense; which bound their brows with wreaths of laurel, and consigned their memories to immortal fame. For as yet tyrants were not beheld with a superstitious reverence; as yet they were not regarded with tenderness and complacency, as the vicerents or deputies of Christ, as they have suddenly professed to be; as yet the vulgar, stupified by the subtle casuistry of the priest, had not degenerated into a state of barbarism, more gross than that which disgraces the most senseless natives of Hindostan. For these make mischievous demons,

whose malice they cannot resist, the objects of their religious adoration : while those elevate impotent tyrants, in order to shield them from destruction, into the rank of gods ; and, to their own cost, consecrate the pests of the human race. But against this dark array of long-received opinions, superstitions, obloquy, and fears, which some dread even more than the enemy himself, the English had to contend ; and all this, under the light of better information, and favoured by an impulse from above, they overcame with such singular enthusiasm and bravery, that, great as were the numbers engaged in the contest, the grandeur of conception and loftiness of spirit which were universally displayed, merited for each individual more than a mediocrity of fame ; and Britain, which was formerly styled the hot-bed of tyranny, will hereafter deserve to be celebrated for endless ages as a soil most genial to the growth of liberty. During the mighty struggle, no anarchy, no licentiousness was seen ; no illusions of glory, no extravagant emulation of the ancients inflamed them with a thirst for ideal liberty ; but the rectitude of their lives, and the sobriety of their habits, taught them the only true and safe road to real liberty ; and they took up arms only to defend the sanctity of the laws and the rights of conscience.”*

It will be obvious, that, in the concluding sentence, Milton is expressing his respect for the Puritans, with whose religious sentiments and political principles he felt the closest sympathy. Of all classes of mankind who have played a conspicuous part in history, the Puritans, perhaps, have been the most misunderstood. The reason of this is, that they have been chiefly portrayed in history by those who were incapable of understanding their character, and committed by political considerations to misrepresent their conduct. It is not presumptuous to predict, that a day will come when men will desiderate a fairer history of these remarkable men, as illustrating the annals of an era which caught, untaught by the beams of a later civilization, the long-obstructed

* Prose Works, vol. i., pp. 216—218.

radiance of the apostolic age. One tribute, however, to their honour must ever be rescued from oblivion, by a spirit of eloquence imbibed from the loving study of Milton himself, and as such, claiming a right to adorn these pages:—"The Puritans," says Mr. Macaulay, "were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with Him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and meanest of mankind seemed to vanish, when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognised no title to superiority but his favour; and, confident of that favour, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt assured that they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems, crowns of glory which should never fade away! On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt; for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language—nobles by the right of an earlier

creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged—on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest, who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events, which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes, had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed His will, by the pen of the evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had arisen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God !”*

It has been already said that the Queen of Sweden, on reading the controversy between Salmasius and Milton, openly manifested her preference for the English statesman. The testimonies of her previous regard for his opponent, while they excited the jealousy of his wife, were doubtless either unknown to or discredited by Milton, and he consequently honours her in this work with one of the most eloquent panegyrics to be found in his writings. “How happy am I,” he says, “beyond my utmost expectations! (for to the praise of eloquence, except as far as eloquence consists in the force of truth, I lay no claim,) that, when the critical exigencies of my country demanded that I should undertake the arduous and invidious task of impugning the rights of kings, I should meet with so illustrious, so truly a royal evidence to my integrity, and to this truth, that I had not written a word against kings, but only against tyrants, the spots and the pests of royalty? But you, O Augusta, pos-

* *Edinburgh Review*, vol. xlii. pp. 338—340.¹

sessed not only so much magnanimity, but were so irradiated by the glorious beams of wisdom and of virtue, that you not only read with patience, with incredible impartiality, with a serene complacency of countenance, what might seem to be levelled against your rights and dignity, but expressed such an opinion of the defender of those rights, as may well be considered an adjudication of the palm of victory to his opponent. You, O queen! will for ever be the object of my homage, my veneration, and my love; for it was your greatness of soul, so honourable to yourself and so auspicious to me, which served to efface the unfavourable impression against me at other courts, and to rescue me from the evil surmises of other sovereigns. What a high and favourable opinion must foreigners conceive, and your own subjects for ever entertain, of your impartiality and justice, when, in a matter which so nearly interested the fate of sovereigns and the rights of your crown, they saw you sit down to the discussion with as much equanimity and composure, as you would to determine a dispute between two private individuals! It was not in vain that you made such large collections of books, and so many monuments of learning—not, indeed, that they could contribute much to your instruction, but because they so well teach your subjects to appreciate the merits of your reign, and the rare excellence of your virtue and your wisdom; for the Divinity himself seems to have inspired you with a love of wisdom and a thirst for improvement, beyond what any books ever could have produced. It excites our astonishment to see a force of intellect so truly divine, a particle of celestial flame so resplendently pure, in a region so remote; of which an atmosphere, so darkened with clouds and so chilled with frosts, could not extinguish the light nor repress the operations. The rocky and barren soil, which is often as unfavourable to the growth of genius as of plants, has not impeded the maturation of your faculties; and that country, so rich in metallic ore, which appears like a cruel stepmother to others, seems to have been a fos-

tering parent to you, and, after the most strenuous attempts, to have at last produced a progeny of pure gold. I would invoke you, Christina! as the only child of the renowned and victorious Adolphus, if your merit did not as much eclipse his as wisdom excels strength, and the arts of peace the havoc of war. Henceforth the queen of the south will not be alone renowned in history; for there is a queen of the north, who would not only be worthy to appear in the court of the wise king of the Jews, or any king of equal wisdom, but to whose court others may from all parts repair, to behold so fair a heroine, so bright a pattern of all the royal virtues; and to the crown of whose praise this may well be added, that neither in her conduct nor her appearance is there any of the forbidding reserve or the ostentatious parade of royalty. She herself seems the least conscious of her own attributes of sovereignty; and her thoughts are always fixed on something greater and more sublime than the glitter of a crown. In this respect her example may well make innumerable kings hide their diminished heads. She may, if such is the fatality of the Swedish nation, abdicate the sovereignty, but she can never lay aside the queen; for her reign has proved, that she is fit to govern, not only Sweden, but the world.”*

Milton next addresses himself to the calumnies heaped upon him by his unprincipled opponent; and in replying to them, records that concise autobiography which gives a peculiar interest to this Second Defence, and which constitutes, indeed, the skeleton of all the numerous memoirs of him which have been given to the public. Like the present sketch, it is chiefly a history of his successive works. One fact connected with these requires to be particularly mentioned: it is said that he received a thousand pounds from the government. In reference to this subject Milton says:—“Such were the fruits of my private studies, which I gratuitously presented to the church and to the state; and for

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 249—251.

which I was recompensed by nothing but impunity; though the actions themselves procured me peace of conscience, and the approbation of the good; while I exercised that freedom of discussion which I loved. Others, without labour or desert, got possession of honours and emoluments; but no one ever knew me either soliciting anything myself, or, through the medium of my friends, ever beheld me in a supplicating posture at the doors of the senate, or the levées of the great. I usually kept myself secluded at home, where my own property, part of which had been withheld during the civil commotions, and part of which had been absorbed in the oppressive contributions which I had to sustain, afforded me a scanty subsistence.”*

In another place he reiterates this affirmation:—“Know thou,” he says, “that that aggrandisement and wealth which you charge against me, and that on the account on which you chiefly accuse me, I was never made richer by a single penny.” The chief value of Mr. Todd’s biographical sketch of Milton is derived from the extracts he publishes from the orders of council preserved in his Majesty’s state paper office, to which the late Sir Robert Peel, then secretary of state, kindly permitted him the freest access. The minutes which he reproduces from these interesting records fully substantiate the veracity of Milton: they are as follow:—“1651, June 18. Ordered, that thanks be given to Mr. Milton, on the behalf of the commonwealth, for his good services done in writing an answer to the book of Salmasius, written against the proceedings of the commonwealth of England.” But all this is crossed over, and nearly three lines following are obliterated, in which a grant of money was made to Milton. But after the cancelled passage the regular entry thus follows: “The council taking notice of the many good services performed by John Milton, their secretary for foreign languages, to this state and commonwealth, particularly for his book in vindication of the

* Prose Works, vol. i. p. 260.

parliament and people of England, against the calumnies and invectives of Salmasius, have thought fit to declare their resentment and good acceptance of the same; and that the thanks of the council be returned to Mr. Milton, and their sense represented in that behalf."

The latter part of Milton's "Second Defence of the People of England" is occupied in the defence of Cromwell from the short-sighted attacks of More. These he refutes by the most infrangible historical testimony. After citing the great facts which existed in the memory of that generation, he proceeds to say:—"He seems, for the most part, to have followed the worst councils, and those too of the worst advisers. Charles is the victim of persuasion, Charles the dupe of imposition, Charles the pageant of delusion; he is intimidated by fear or dazzled by hope; and carried about here and there, the common prey of every faction, whether they be friends or foes. Let them either erase these facts from their writings, or cease to extol the sagacity of Charles. Though, therefore, a superior degree of penetration is an honourable distinction, yet when a country is torn with factions, it is not without its inconveniences; and the most discreet and cautious are most exposed to the calumnies of opposite factions. This often proved an obstacle in the way of Cromwell. Hence the presbyterians, and hence the enemy, impute every harsh treatment which they experience, not to the parliament, but to Cromwell alone. They do not even hesitate to ascribe their own indiscretions and miscarriages to the fraud and treachery of Cromwell; against him every invective is levelled, and every censure passed. Indeed, the flight of Charles to the Isle of Wight, which took place while Cromwell was at a distance, was so sudden and unexpected, that he acquainted by letter every member then in the metropolis with the extraordinary occurrence. But this was the state of the case: the king, alarmed by the clamours of the whole army, which, neither softened by his entreaties nor his promises, had begun to

demand his punishment, he determined to make his escape in the night, with two trusty followers. But more determined to fly than rightly knowing where to fly, he was induced, either by the ignorance or the cowardice of his attendants, to surrender himself to Hammond, governor of the Isle of Wight, whence he thought that he might easily be conveyed by ship into France or Holland. This is what I have learned concerning the king's flight to the Isle of Wight, from those who possessed the readiest means of obtaining information."*

After disposing of some other charges, he commences an historical notice of Cromwell, followed by a noble panegyric which would immortalize the protector, were his military and political exploits expunged from the page of history. "In speaking of such a man," he says, "who has merited so well of his country, I should do nothing if I only exculpated him from crimes; particularly since it not only so nearly concerns the country, but even myself, who am so closely implicated in the same disgrace, to evince to all nations, and, as far as I can, to all ages, the excellence of his character, and the splendour of his renown. Oliver Cromwell was sprung from a line of illustrious ancestors, who were distinguished for the civil functions which they sustained under the monarchy, and still more for the part which they took in restoring and establishing true religion in this country. In the vigour and maturity of his life, which he passed in retirement, he was conspicuous for nothing more than for the strictness of his religious habits, and the innocence of his life; and he had tacitly cherished in his breast that flame of piety which was afterwards to stand him in so much stead on the greatest occasions, and in the most critical exigencies. In the last parliament which was called by the king, he was elected to represent his native town, when he soon became distinguished by the justness of his opinions, and the vigour and decision of his councils. When

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 283, 284.

the sword was drawn, he offered his services, and was appointed to a troop of horse, whose numbers were soon increased by the pious and the good, who flocked from all quarters to his standard; and in a short time he almost surpassed the greatest generals in the magnitude and the rapidity of his achievements. Nor is this surprising; for he was a soldier disciplined to perfection in the knowledge of himself. He had either extinguished, or by habit had learned to subdue, the whole host of vain hopes, fears, and passions, which infest the soul. He first acquired the government of himself, and over himself acquired the most signal victories; so that on the first day he took the field against the external enemy, he was a veteran in arms, consummately practised in the toils and exigencies of war. It is not possible for me, in the narrow limits in which I circumscribe myself on this occasion, to enumerate the many towns which he has taken, the many battles which he has won. The whole surface of the British empire has been the scene of his exploits, and the theatre of his triumphs; which alone would furnish ample materials for a history, and want a copiousness of narration not inferior to the magnitude and diversity of the transactions. This alone seems to be a sufficient proof of his extraordinary and almost supernatural virtue, that by the vigour of his genius, or the excellence of his discipline, adapted, not more to the necessities of war than to the precepts of Christianity, the good and the brave were from all quarters attracted to his camp, not only as to the best school of military talents, but of piety and virtue; and that during the whole war, and the occasional intervals of peace, amid so many vicissitudes of faction and of events, he retained and still retains the obedience of his troops, not by largesses or indulgence, but by his sole authority and the regularity of his pay. In this instance his fame may rival that of Cyrus, of Epaminondas, or any of the great generals of antiquity. Hence he collected an army as numerous and as well equipped as any one ever

did in so short a time ; which was uniformly obedient to his orders, and dear to the affections of the citizens ; which was formidable to the enemy in the field, but never cruel to those who laid down their arms ; which committed no lawless ravages on the persons or the property of the inhabitants ; who, when they compared their conduct with the turbulence, the intemperance, the impiety, and the debauchery of the royalists, were wont to salute them as friends, and to consider them as guests. They were a stay to the good, a terror to the evil, and the warmest advocates for every exertion of piety and virtue. Nor would it be right to pass over the name of Fairfax, who united the utmost fortitude with the utmost courage ; and the spotless innocence of whose life seemed to point him out as the peculiar favourite of Heaven. Justly, indeed, may you be excited to receive this wreath of praise ; though you have retired as much as possible from the world, and seek those shades of privacy which were the delight of Scipio. Nor was it only the enemy whom you subdued, but you have triumphed over that flame of ambition and that lust of glory which are wont to make the best and the greatest of men their slaves. The purity of your virtues and the splendour of your actions consecrate those sweets of ease which you enjoy, and which constitute the wished-for haven of the toils of man. Such was the ease which, when the heroes of antiquity possessed, after a life of exertion and glory not greater than yours, the poets, in despair of finding ideas or expressions better suited to the subject, feigned that they were received into heaven, and invited to recline at the tables of the gods. But whether it were your health, which I principally believe, or any other motive which caused you to retire, of this I am convinced, that nothing could have induced you to relinquish the service of your country, if you had not known that in your successor liberty would meet with a protector, and England with a stay to its safety, and a pillar to its glory. For, while you, O Cromwell, are left among us, he hardly shows a proper

confidence in the Supreme, who distrusts the security of England; when he sees that you are in so special a manner the favoured object of the Divine regard. But there was another department of the war, which was destined for your exclusive exertions.”*

After detailing the main points of Cromwell's military administration, he thus asserts his fitness to exercise the duties of the chief magistracy of his country:—"In this state of desolation, to which we were reduced, you, O Cromwell, alone remained to conduct the government, and to save the country. We all willingly yield the palm of sovereignty to your unrivalled ability and virtue, except the few among us, who, either ambitious of honours which they have not the capacity to sustain, or who envy those which are conferred on one more worthy than themselves, or else who do not know that nothing in the world is more pleasing to God, more agreeable to reason, more politically just, or more generally useful, than that the supreme power should be vested in the best and the wisest of men. Such, O Cromwell, all acknowledge you to be; such are the services which you have rendered, as the leader of our councils, the general of our armies, and the father of your country. For this is the tender appellation by which all the good among us salute you from the very soul. Other names you neither have nor could endure; and you deservedly reject that pomp of title which attracts the gaze and admiration of the multitude. For what is a title but a certain definite mode of dignity? but actions such as yours surpass, not only the bounds of our admiration, but our titles; and, like the points of pyramids, which are lost in the clouds, they soar above the possibilities of titular commendation. But since, though it be not fit, it may be expedient, that the highest pitch of virtue should be circumscribed within the bounds of some human appellation, you endured to receive, for the public good, a title most like to that of the father of your

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 285—287.

country; not to exalt, but rather to bring you nearer to the level of ordinary men; the title of king was unworthy the transcendent majesty of your character. For if you had been captivated by a name over which, as a private man, you had so completely triumphed and crumbled into dust, you would have been doing the same thing as if, after having subdued some idolatrous nation by the help of the true God, you should afterwards fall down and worship the gods which you had vanquished.”*

To this Milton adds an exhortation which must for ever clear him from the charge of having yielded an unworthy subservience to the great man under whom he served and whom he so cordially admired. Nothing can exceed the boldness and lofty independence of tone with which he urges his exhortations on the Protector, and though the quotation is long, it is due to the memory of Milton to present it to the reader:—“Do you then, sir, continue your course with the same unrivalled magnanimity; it sits well upon you;—to you our country owes its liberties; nor can you sustain a character at once more momentous and more august than that of the author, the guardian, and the preserver of our liberties; and hence you have not only eclipsed the achievements of all our kings, but even those which have been fabled of our heroes. Often reflect what a dear pledge the beloved land of your nativity has entrusted to your care; and that liberty which she once expected only from the chosen flower of her talents and her virtues, she now expects from you only, and by you only hopes to obtain. Revere the fond expectations which we cherish, the solitudes of your anxious country; revere the looks and the wounds of your brave companions in arms, who, under your banners, have so strenuously fought for liberty; revere the shades of those who perished in the contest; revere also the opinions and the hopes which foreign states entertain concerning us, who promise to themselves so many

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 288, 289.

advantages from that liberty which we have so bravely acquired, from the establishment of that new government which has begun to shed its splendour on the world, which, if it be suffered to vanish like a dream, would involve us in the deepest abyss of shame; and lastly, revere yourself; and, after having endured so many sufferings and encountered so many perils for the sake of liberty, do not suffer it, now it is obtained, either to be violated by yourself, or in any one instance impaired by others. You cannot be truly free unless we are free too; for such is the nature of things, that he who entrenches on the liberty of others, is the first to lose his own and become a slave. But if you, who have hitherto been the patron and tutelary genius of liberty, if you, who are exceeded by no one in justice, in piety, and goodness, should hereafter invade that liberty which you have defended, your conduct must be fatally operative, not only against the cause of liberty, but the general interests of piety and virtue. Your integrity and virtue will appear to have evaporated, your faith in religion to have been small; your character with posterity will dwindle into insignificance, by which a most destructive blow will be levelled against the happiness of mankind. The work which you have undertaken is of incalculable moment, which will thoroughly sift and expose every principle and sensation of your heart, which will fully display the vigour and genius of your character, which will evince whether you really possess those great qualities of piety, fidelity, justice, and self-denial, which made us believe that you were elevated by the special direction of the Deity to the highest pinnacle of power. At once wisely and discreetly to hold the sceptre over three powerful nations, to persuade people to relinquish inveterate and corrupt for new and more beneficial maxims and institutions, to penetrate into the remotest parts of the country, to have the mind present and operative in every quarter, to watch against surprise, to provide against danger, to reject the blandishments of

pleasure and pomp of power;—these are exertions compared with which the labour of war is mere pastime; which will require every energy and employ every faculty that you possess; which demand a man supported from above, and almost instructed by immediate inspiration. These, and more than these are, no doubt, the objects which occupy your attention and engross your soul; as well as the means by which you may accomplish these important ends, and render our liberty at once more ample and more secure. And this you can, in my opinion, in no other way so readily effect, as by associating in your councils the companions of your dangers and your toils; men of exemplary modesty, integrity, and courage; whose hearts have not been hardened in cruelty and rendered insensible to pity by the sight of so much ravage and so much death, but whom it has rather inspired with the love of justice, with a respect for religion, and with the feeling of compassion, and who are more zealously interested in the preservation of liberty, in proportion as they have encountered more perils in its defence. They are not strangers or foreigners, a hireling rout scraped together from the dregs of the people; but, for the most part, men of the better conditions in life, of families not disgraced if not ennobled, of fortunes either ample or moderate. And what if some among them are recommended by their poverty? for it was not the lust of ravage which brought them into the field; it was the calamitous aspect of the times, which, in the most critical circumstances, and often amid the most disastrous turn of fortune, roused them to attempt the deliverance of their country from the fangs of despotism. They were men prepared, not only to debate, but to fight; not only to argue in the senate, but to engage the enemy in the field. But unless we will continually cherish indefinite and illusory expectations, I see not in whom we can place any confidence, if not in these men and such as these. We have the surest and most indubitable pledge of their fidelity in this, that they have already ex-

posed themselves to death in the service of their country; of their piety in this, that they have been always wont to ascribe the whole glory of their successes to the favour of the Deity, whose help they have so suppliantly implored, and so conspicuously obtained; of their justice in this, that they even brought the king to trial, and when his guilt was proved, refused to save his life; of their moderation in our own uniform experience of its effects, and because, if by any outrage they should disturb the peace which they have procured, they themselves will be the first to feel the miseries which it will occasion, the first to meet the havoc of the sword, and the first again to risk their lives for all those comforts and distinctions which they have so happily acquired; and lastly, of their fortitude in this, that there is no instance of any people who ever recovered their liberty with so much courage and success; and therefore, let us not suppose, that there can be any persons who will be more zealous in preserving it.”*

He then commemorates the merits of the distinguished persons who, in the past contest, which was at once religious and political, had sustained the general by their counsels and their arms. “To these men,” he says, “whose talents are so splendid, and whose worth has been so thoroughly tried, you would without doubt do right to trust the protection of our liberties; nor would it be easy to say to whom they might more safely be entrusted. Then, if you leave the church to its own government, and relieve yourself and the other public functionaries from a charge so onerous, and so incompatible with your functions; and will no longer suffer two powers, so different as the civil and the ecclesiastical, to commit fornication together, and by their mutual and delusive aids in appearance to strengthen, but in reality to weaken and finally to subvert, each other; if you shall remove all power of persecution out of the church, (but persecution will never cease, so long as men are bribed

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 289—291.

to preach the gospel by a mercenary salary, which is forcibly extorted, rather than gratuitously bestowed, which serves only to poison religion and to strangle truth,) you will then effectually have cast those money-changers out of the temple, who do not merely truckle with doves, but with the Dove itself, with the Spirit of the Most High.”*

After a noble address to the British people, urging them to carry out the principles and support the government of Cromwell, he closes the “Second Defence of the People of England” with the following words:—“I have delivered my testimony, I would almost say, have erected a monument, that will not readily be destroyed, to the reality of those singular and mighty achievements which were above all praise. As the epic poet, who adheres at all to the rules of that species of composition, does not profess to describe the whole life of the hero whom he celebrates, but only some particular action of his life, as the resentment of Achilles at Troy, the return of Ulysses, or the coming of Æneas into Italy; so it will be sufficient, either for my justification or apology, that I have heroically celebrated at least one exploit of my countrymen. I pass by the rest, for who could recite the achievements of a whole people? If, after such a display of courage and of vigour, you basely relinquish the path of virtue, if you do anything unworthy of yourselves, posterity will sit in judgment on your conduct. They will see that the foundations were well laid; that the beginning (nay, it was more than a beginning) was glorious; but with deep emotions of concern will they regret, that those were wanting who might have completed the structure. They will lament that perseverance was not conjoined with such exertions and such virtues. They will see that there was a rich harvest of glory, and an opportunity afforded for the greatest achievements, but that men only were wanting for the execution; while they were not wanting who could

* Prose Works, vol. i. p. 293.

rightly counsel, exhort, inspire, and bind an unfading wreath of praise round the brows of the illustrious actors in so glorious a scene."*

The "Second Defence of the People of England" is in many respects the most valuable of Milton's prose writings. It is the chief repository from which we draw our information as to his personal history. It yields to none of his treatises in sustained grandeur of style. It is rich in the noblest sentiments of patriotism and freedom, both civil and religious; and by the perusal of those eloquent panegyrics in which he embalms the reputation of his eminent fellow-workers, we are impressed at once with the candour and generosity of Milton, and the blind prejudice of the biographer who could affirm, that no man who had written so much had praised so few.

* Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 299, 300.

CHAPTER XV.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE DEATH OF CROMWELL—MILTON PUBLISHES THE
“TREATISE OF THE CIVIL POWER IN ECCLESIASTICAL CAUSES”—
ANALYSIS OF THE WORK—PUBLISHES THE “CONSIDERATIONS TOUCH-
ING THE LIKELIEST MEANS TO REMOVE HIRELINGS OUT OF THE
CHURCH”—ANALYSIS OF THE WORK.

THE political aspect of this country was never more distressing to the friends, and portentous to the cause, of freedom, than at the period to which this narrative has now been conducted. The vigorous administration of Cromwell alone preserved the external tranquillity of the empire, and, under that government, the rights of the subject, and especially the claims of religious freedom, were habitually respected; but all the elements of disorder and devastation existed, in unseen activity, beneath the surface of society. The presbyterians, deprived of political power, cherished all their old intolerance, exacerbated by vindictiveness. The royalists were not slow to perceive, that they hated independency—which, in this instance, may be taken as the exponent of religious freedom,—with even more bitterness than they had ever testified against prelacy in the palmy days of its reign of terror. Hence they reckoned, and rightly as the event proved, upon the speedy co-operation of that faction. The army, on the contrary, was chiefly composed of independents—men whose devotion to freedom was the second table of their law—the secular phase of an enthusiastic religion. The death of Cromwell was the removal

of the keystone of the uncemented arch, and the result was the subsidence of the whole fabric into irreparable ruin.

The weight and value of Cromwell can only be truly estimated from the effects produced by his decease; and the observations of Mr. Macaulay on this point are as admirable for their truth as they are for their force and beauty. He says, "At the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enemies rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well, no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it—the darkest and most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honour been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition, which stopped short of open rebellion, provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the "Instrument of Government," and the "Humble Petition and Advice," were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But, had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority; for his death dissolved the whole frame of society."*

* Edin. Review, vol. xlii. p. 336.

Milton saw with the deepest anxiety the perils which threatened that cause to which he had devoted his life, and for which he was calmly prepared to lay it down. He augured at once the religious intolerance which would grow with the growth of presbyterian influence, and sought to stay its effects by the publication of three treatises, all of which appeared in 1659, and within about twelve months after the death of the protector. The first of these is entitled, "A Treatise of the Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes."

In the commencement of this latter treatise, he evidently refers to the former also, as equally forming part of his design. "Two things there be," he says, "which have been ever found working much mischief to the church of God and the advancement of truth—force on one side restraining, and hire on the other side corrupting, the teachers thereof. Few ages have been, since the ascension of our Saviour, wherein the one of these two, or both together, have not prevailed. It can be at no time, therefore, unseasonable to speak of these things, since by them the church is either in continual detriment and oppression, or in continual danger. The former shall be at this time my argument; the latter as I shall find God disposing me, and opportunity inviting."*

He next proceeds to lay down the general proposition to be proved, "That for belief or practice in religion, according to this conscientious persuasion, no man ought to be punished or molested by any outward force on earth whatsoever, I distrust not, through God's implored assistance, to make plain by these following arguments:—First, it cannot be denied, being the main foundation of our protestant religion, that we of these ages, having no other Divine rule or authority from without us, warrantable to one another as a common ground, but the Holy Scripture, and no other within us but the illumination of the Holy Spirit, so interpreting that scripture

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 522.

as warrantable only to ourselves, and to such whose consciences we can so persuade, can have no other ground in matters of religion but only from the Scriptures. And these being not possible to be understood without this Divine illumination, which no man can know at all times to be in himself, much less to be at any time for certain in any other, it follows clearly, that no man or body of men in these times can be the infallible judges or determiners in matters of religion to any other men's consciences but their own."*

After demonstrating this position by a variety of scriptural arguments, he says, with reference to the apostles and *à fortiori* to ordinary ministers, "Having no dominion over the faith† or conscience of the flock whom they are to feed, not by constraint, neither as being lords over God's heritage;" ‡ and then adds, "But some will object, that this overthrows all church discipline, all censure of errors, if no man can determine. My answer is, that what they hear is plain scripture, which forbids not church sentence or determining, but as it ends in violence upon the conscience unconvinced. Let whoso will interpret or determine, so it be according to true church discipline, which is exercised on them only who have willingly joined themselves in that covenant of union, and proceeds only to a separation from the rest, proceeds never to any corporal enforcement or forfeiture of money, which in all spiritual things are the two arms of Antichrist, not of the true church; the one being an inquisition, the other no better than a temporal indulgence of sin for money, whether by the church exacted or by the magistrate; both the one and the other a temporal satisfaction for what Christ hath satisfied eternally; a popish commuting of penalty, corporal for spiritual; a satisfaction to man, especially to the magistrate, for what and to whom we owe none: these and more are the injustices of force and fining in religion, be-

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 523.

† 2 Cor. i. 24.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

sides what I most insist on, the violation of God's express commandment in the gospel, as hath been shown. Thus then, if church governors cannot use force in religion, though but for this reason, because they cannot infallibly determine to the conscience without convincement, much less have civil magistrates authority to use force where they can much less judge; unless they mean only to be the civil executioners of them who have no civil power to give them such commission, no, nor yet ecclesiastical, to any force or violence in religion. To sum up all in brief, if we must believe as the magistrate appoints, why not rather as the church? If not as either without convincement, how can force be lawful?"*

His second argument is thus stated:—"From the riddance of these objections, I proceed yet to another reason why it is unlawful for the civil magistrate to use force in matters of religion; which is, because to judge in those things, though we should grant him able, which is proved he is not, yet as a civil magistrate he hath no right. Christ hath a government of his own, sufficient of itself to all his ends and purposes in governing his church, but much different from that of the civil magistrate. And the difference in this very thing principally consists, that it governs not by outward force, and that for two reasons: first, because it deals only with the inward man and his actions, which are all spiritual, and to outward force not liable; secondly, to show us the divine excellence of his spiritual kingdom, able without worldly force to subdue all the powers and kingdoms of this world, which are upheld by outward force only."†

This, again, he substantiates, as he proposed at the outset, by arguments drawn from Scripture only, and proceeds: "I have shown that the civil power hath neither right nor can do right by forcing religious things; I will now show the wrong it doth, by violating the fundamental privilege of the gospel, the new birthright of every true believer—Christian liberty: 2 Cor. iii. 17, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is,

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 526.

† Ibid. p. 533.

there is liberty;’ Gal. iv. 26, ‘Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all;’ and ver. 31, ‘We are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.’ It will be sufficient in this place to say no more of Christian liberty than that it sets us free, not only from the bondage of those ceremonies, but also from the forcible imposition of those circumstances, place, and time in the worship of God, which, though by him commanded in the old law, yet in respect of that verity and freedom which is evangelical, St. Paul comprehends both kinds alike: that is to say, both ceremony and circumstance, under one and the same contemptuous name of ‘weak and beggarly rudiments.’”*

His concluding argument is as follows:—

“A fourth reason why the magistrate ought not to use force in religion, I bring from the consideration of all those ends which he can likely pretend to the interposing of his force therein; and those hardly can be other than first the glory of God; next, either the spiritual good of them whom he forces, or the temporal punishment of their scandal to others. As for the promoting of God’s glory, none, I think, will say that his glory ought to be promoted in religious things by unwarrantable means, much less by means contrary to what he hath commanded. That outward force is such, and that God’s glory in the whole administration of the gospel according to his own will and counsel ought to be fulfilled by weakness, at least so refuted, not by force; or if by force, inward and spiritual, not outward and corporeal, is already proved at large. That outward force cannot tend to the good of him who is forced in religion, is unquestionable. For, in religion, whatever we do under the gospel, we ought to be thereof persuaded without scruple; and are justified by the faith we have, not by the work we do: Rom. xiv. 5, ‘Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.’”†

He says, in conclusion:—

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 539. † Ibid. p. 542.

“On these four scriptural reasons, as on a firm square, this truth, the right of Christian and evangelic liberty, will stand immovable against all those pretended consequences of licence and confusion, which, for the most part, men most licentious and confused themselves, or such as whose severity would be wiser than divine wisdom, are ever aptest to object against the ways of God: as if God, without them, when he gave us this liberty, knew not of the worst which these men in their arrogance pretend will follow: yet knowing all their worst, he gave us this liberty as by him judged best. As to those magistrates who think it their work to settle religion, and those ministers or others who so oft call upon them to do so, I trust, that having well considered what hath been here argued, neither they will continue in that intention, nor these in that expectation from them; when they shall find that the settlement of religion belongs only to each particular church by persuasive and spiritual means within itself, and that the defence only of the church belongs to the magistrate. Had he once learned not further to concern himself with church affairs, half his labour might be spared, and the commonwealth better tended.”*

The treatise of “Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes” was addressed to the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England, and contains one wise admonition, to which it would have been well if other parliaments besides that had borne in mind:—“Yet not for this cause only do I require or trust to find acceptance, but in a twofold respect besides: first, as bringing clear evidence of scripture and protestant maxims to the parliament of England, who in all their late acts, upon occasion, have professed to assert only the true protestant Christian religion, as it is contained in the Holy Scriptures: next, in regard that your power being but for a time, and having in yourselves a Christian liberty of your own, which at one time or other may be oppressed, thereof

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 546, 547.

truly sensible, it will concern you while you are in power, so to regard other men's consciences, as you would your own should be regarded in the power of others; and to consider that any law against conscience is alike in force against any conscience, and so may one way or other justly redound upon yourselves."*

Very shortly after the publication of this work appeared the companion treatise, entitled "Considerations touching the Likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church." This, like the former, was addressed to the Parliament, and its positions are entirely supported by scriptural arguments.

His general proposition is as follows:—

"Hire of itself is neither a thing unlawful, nor a word of any evil note, signifying no more than a due recompense or reward; as when our Saviour saith, 'The labourer is worthy of his hire.' That which makes it so dangerous in the church, and properly makes the hireling a word always of evil signification, is either the excess thereof, or the undue manner of giving and taking it. What harm the excess thereof brought to the church, perhaps was not found by experience till the days of Constantine; who out of his zeal thinking he could be never too liberally a nursing father of the church, might be not unfitly said to have either overlaid it or choked it in the nursing. Which was foretold, as is recorded in ecclesiastical traditions, by a voice heard from heaven, on the very day that those great donations and church revenues were given, crying aloud, 'This day is poison poured into the church.' Which the event soon after verified, as appears by another no less ancient observation, 'That religion brought forth wealth, and the daughter devoured the mother.'"+

In pursuance of his main object, he proposes to consider, first, what recompense God hath ordained should be given to ministers of the church—for that a recompense ought to

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 521.

+ Ibid. vol. iii. p. 5.

be given them, and may by them justly be received, our Saviour himself, from the very light of reason and of equity hath declared, Luke x. 7: "The labourer is worthy of his hire;" next, by whom; and, lastly, in what manner. The first of these divisions is designed to prove that the imposition of tithes is inconsistent with the spirit and constitution of the Christian religion. "What recompense," he says, "ought to be given to church ministers, God hath answerably ordained according to that difference which he hath manifestly put between those his two great dispensations, the law and the gospel. Under the law, he gave them tithes; under the gospel, having left all things in his church to charity and Christian freedom, he hath given them only what is justly given them. That, as well under the gospel as under the law, say our English divines, and they only of all protestants, is tithes; and they say true, if any man be so minded as to give them of his own the tenth or twentieth; but that the law therefore of tithes is in force under the gospel, all other protestant divines, though equally concerned, yet constantly deny. For although hire to the labourer be of moral and perpetual right, yet that special kind of hire, the tenth, can be of no right or necessity, but to that special labour for which God ordained it. That special labour was the Levitical and ceremonial service of the tabernacle, Numb. xviii. 21, 31, which is now abolished: the right, therefore, of that special hire must needs be withal abolished, as being also ceremonial. That tithes were ceremonial, is plain, not being given to the Levites till they had been first offered a heave-offering to the Lord, ver. 24, 28. He, then, who by that law brings tithes into the gospel, of necessity brings in withal a sacrifice and an altar; without which tithes by that law were unsanctified and polluted, ver. 42, and therefore never thought on in the first Christian times, till ceremonies, altars, and oblations, by an ancients corruption, were brought back long before. And yet the Jews, ever since their temple was destroyed,

though they have rabbies and teachers of their law, yet pay no tithes, as having no Levites to whom, no temple where, to pay them, no altar whereon to hallow them; which argues that the Jews themselves never thought tithes moral, but ceremonial only. That Christians, therefore, should take them up when Jews have laid them down, must needs be very absurd and preposterous.”*

After supporting this position with great ability, and answering all the objections of his opponents, by appealing to the authority of Scripture, he proceeds to his second topic:—

“The next thing to be considered in the maintenance of ministers, is by whom it should be given. Wherein though the light of reason might sufficiently inform us, it will be best to consult the Scripture. Gal. vi. 6, ‘Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things:’ that is to say, in all manner of gratitude, to his ability. 1 Cor. ix. 11, ‘If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your carnal things?’ To whom therefore hath not been sown, from him wherefore should be reaped? 1 Tim. v. 17, ‘Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour; especially they who labour in word and doctrine.’ By these places, we see that recompense was given either by every one in particular who had been instructed, or by them all in common, brought into the church-treasury, and distributed to the ministers according to their several labours: and that was judged either by some extraordinary person, as Timothy, who by the apostle was then left evangelist at Ephesus, 2 Tim. iv. 5, or by some to whom the church deputed that care. This is so agreeable to reason, and so clear, that any one may perceive what iniquity and violence hath prevailed since in the church, whereby it hath been so ordered, that they also shall be compelled to recompense the parochial minister, who neither chose him

* Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 6, 7.

for their teacher, nor have received instruction from him, as being either insufficient, or not resident, or inferior to whom they follow ; wherein to bar them their choice, is to violate Christian liberty.”*

Under this head, he cites extensively the testimony of Scripture, and the practice of the apostolic and reformed churches, and concludes as follows:—

“Forced consecrations out of another man’s estate are no better than forced vows, hateful to God, ‘who loves a cheerful giver;’ but much more hateful, wrung out of men’s purses to maintain a disapproved ministry against their conscience ; however unholy, infamous, and dishonourable to his ministers and the free gospel, maintained in such unworthy manner as by violence and extortion. If he give it as to his teacher, what justice or equity compels him to pay for learning that religion which leaves freely to his choice whether he will learn it or no, whether of this teacher or another, and especially to pay for what he never learned, or approves not ; whereby, besides the wound of his conscience, he becomes the less able to recompense his true teacher ? Thus far hath been inquired by whom church-ministers ought to be maintained, and hath been proved most natural, most equal and agreeable with Scripture, to be by them who receive their teaching ; and by whom, if they be unable. Which ways well observed, can discourage none but hirelings, and will much lessen the number in the church.”†

The last topic of consideration is in what manner God has ordained that recompense be given to ministers of the Gospel ; “and,” says Milton, “by all scripture it will appear that he hath given it them not by civil law and freehold, as they claim, but by the benevolence and free gratitude of such as receive them.” In proof of this, he heaps scripture upon scripture, and answers with great severity the objection, that the oppressive charges of the church are necessary

* Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 22, 23.

† Ibid. vol. iii. p. 30.

to sustain a learned ministry by means of an expensive university education.

The treatise concludes with the following bold and nervous passage:—

“Heretofore, in the first evangelical times, (and it were happy for Christendom if it were so again,) ministers of the gospel were by nothing else distinguished from other Christians, but by their spiritual knowledge and sanctity of life, for which the church elected them to be her teachers and overseers, though not thereby to separate them from whatever calling she then found them following besides; as the example of St. Paul declares, and the first times of Christianity. When once they affected to be called a clergy, and became, as it were, a peculiar tribe of Levites, a party, a distinct order in the commonwealth, bred up for divines in babbling schools, and fed at the public cost, good for nothing else but what was good for nothing, they soon grow idle: that idleness, with fulness of bread, begat pride and perpetual contention with their feeders, the despised laity, through all ages ever since; to the perverting of religion, and the disturbance of all Christendom. And we may confidently conclude, it never will be otherwise while they are thus upheld undepending on the church, on which alone they anciently depended, and are by the magistrate publicly maintained, a numerous faction of indigent persons, crept for the most part out of extreme want and bad nurture, claiming by divine right and freehold the tenth of our estates, to monopolize the ministry as their peculiar, which is free and open to all able Christians, elected by any church. Under this pretence, exempt from all other employment, and enriching themselves on the public, they last of all prove common incendiaries, and exalt their horns against the magistrate himself that maintains them, as the priest of Rome did soon after against his benefactor the emperor, and the presbyters of late in Scotland. Of which hiring crew, together with all the mischiefs, dissensions, troubles, wars merely of their

kindling, Christendom might soon rid herself and be happy if Christians would but know their own dignity, their liberty, their adoption, and let it not be wondered if I say, their spiritual priesthood, whereby they have all equally access to any ministerial function, whenever called by their own abilities, and the church, though they never came near commencement or university. But while protestants, to avoid the due labour of understanding their own religion, are content to lodge it in the breast, or rather in the books of a clergyman, and to take it thence by scraps and mam-mocks, as he dispenses it in his Sundays' dole, they will be always learning and never knowing; always infants: always either his vassals, as lay papists are to their priests; or at odds with him, as reformed principles give them some right to be not wholly comformable; whence infinite disturbances in the state, as they do, must needs follow. Thus much I had to say; and, I suppose, what may be enough to them who are not avariciously bent otherwise, touching the likeliest means to remove hirelings out of the Church; than which nothing can more conduce to truth, to peace, and all happiness, both in church and state. If I be not heard nor believed, the event will bear me witness to have spoken truth; and I in the meanwhile have borne my witness, not out of season, to the church and to my country."*

* Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 40, 41.

CHAPTER XVI.

EFFECTS OF POLITICAL REVOLUTIONS—FICKLENESS OF THE ARMY—
MILTON PUBLISHES HIS TRACTS UPON THE COMMONWEALTH—ANALYSIS
OF THESE TREATISES—RESTORATION OF CHARLES II.—MILTON IS
SECRETED BY HIS FRIENDS—PASSING OF THE ACT OF OBLIVION.

ALL history instructs us, and political philosophy is at no loss to account for the fact, that revolutions commenced in deliberation, and carried out by the pacific force of public opinion, subside after temporary turmoil, and precipitate their elements, which crystallize into the regular forms of constitutional government: while those which are engendered and conducted by the brute force of arms, issue appropriately in a military despotism. This is either rendered temporary, by the energies of civilization and public virtue, or, failing those only resources, all that is pure and precious in human society perishes for an extended period, under its inorganic and torpifying pressure. The latter was the sad alternative which was witnessed in England in the year 1660. The army had virtually dissolved one parliament, and re-constituted another, and this also owed its extinction to the same unconstitutional influence. The very theory of a standing army is embarrassed with a dilemma, which is not the less deserving of attention because it is not glaringly obvious. If ill disciplined, it is inefficacious for any purposes save those of feverish irritation, and plethoric expenditure; if highly disciplined, it is the mechanical engine of a few minds who may constitute it a despotic *imperium in imperio*.

Towards the close of the year 1659, Milton saw those gathering clouds which were destined for a time to eclipse, and for a much longer period to obscure, the pure light of constitutional freedom; and in the near prospect of the re-establishment of the Stuart dynasty, and, consequently, of the principles of Divine right and passive obedience, both civil and spiritual, and that with an activity intensified by temporary suppression, he published three tracts on the political position of his country, though evidently with the fullest recognition of the personal peril which such a measure must involve. The first of these is entitled, "A Letter to a Friend, concerning the Ruptures of the Commonwealth." The second and third were addressed to General Monk, and entitled, "The Present Means and Brief Delineation of a Free Commonwealth," and "The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth." These are so similar in design and spirit, that they may be treated here as a single and continuous treatise.

After lamenting the fickleness of the army, he thus proceeds to appeal to them, and to state the principles on which alone the liberties of the country could be maintained:—

"How grievous will it then be! how infamous to the true religion which we profess! how dishonourable to the name of God, that his fear and the power of his knowledge in an army professing to be his, should not work that obedience, that fidelity to their supreme magistrates, that levied them and paid them; when the light of nature, the laws of human society, covenants and contracts, yea common shame, works in other armies, amongst the worst of them! Which will undoubtedly pull down the heavy judgments of God among us, who cannot but avenge these hypocrisies, violations of truth and holiness; if they be indeed so as they yet seem. For neither do I speak this in reproach to the army, but as jealous of their honour, inciting them to manifest and publish with all speed, some better

cause of these their late actions, than hath hitherto appeared, and to find out the Achan amongst them, whose close ambition in all likelihood abuses their honest natures against their meaning to these disorders; their readiest way to bring in again the common enemy, and with him the destruction of true religion, and civil liberty.

“But, because our evils are now grown more dangerous and extreme, than to be remedied by complaints, it concerns us now to find out what remedies may be likeliest to save us from approaching ruin. Being now in anarchy, without a counselling and governing power; and the army, I suppose, finding themselves insufficient to discharge at once both military and civil affairs, the first thing to be found out with all speed, without which no commonwealth can subsist, must be a senate, or general council of state, in whom must be the power, first to preserve the public peace; next, the commerce with foreign nations; and lastly, to raise monies for the management of these affairs: this must either be the parliament re-admitted to sit, or a council of state allowed of by the army, since they only now have the power. The terms to be stood on are, liberty of conscience to all professing Scripture to be the rule of their faith and worship: and the abjuration of a single person.”*

Milton next details his views of the best means of constituting a parliament and council of state, so as to supersede the institutions of monarchy and the House of Lords, and thus appeals again to the self-respect of his countrymen:—

“After our liberty and religion thus prosperously fought for, gained, and many years possessed, except in those unhappy interruptions, which God hath removed; now that nothing remains, but in all reason the certain hopes of a speedy and immediate settlement for ever in a firm and free commonwealth, for this extolled and magnified nation, regardless both of honour won, or deliverances

* Prose Works, vol. iii. p. 405.

vouchsafed from heaven, to fall back, or rather to creep back so poorly, as it seems the multitude would, to their once abjured and detested thralldom of kingship, to be ourselves the slanderers of our own just and religious deeds, though done by some to covetous and ambitious ends, yet not therefore to be stained with their infamy, or they to asperse the integrity of others; and yet these now by revolting from the conscience of deeds well done, both in church and state, to throw away and forsake, or rather to betray a just and noble cause for the mixture of bad men who have ill-managed and abused it, (which had our fathers done heretofore, and on the same pretence deserted true religion, what had long ere this become of our gospel, and all Protestant Reformation, so much intermixed with the avarice and ambition of some reformers?) and by thus relapsing, to verify all the bitter predictions of our triumphing enemies, who will now think they wisely discerned and justly censured both us and all our actions as rash, rebellious, hypocritical, and impious; not only argues a strange, degenerate contagion suddenly spread among us, fitted and prepared for new slavery, but will render us a scorn and derision to all our neighbours.

“And what will they at best say of us, and of the whole English name, but scoffingly, as of that foolish builder mentioned by our Saviour, who began to build a tower, and was not able to finish it? Where is this goodly tower of a commonwealth, which the English boasted they would build to overshadow kings, and be another Rome in the west? The foundation indeed they lay gallantly, but fell into a worse confusion, not of tongues, but of factions, than those at the tower of Babel; and have left no memorial of their work behind them remaining but in the common laughter of Europe.” *

Dr. Johnson remarks, with that inaccuracy which marks almost every general observation on which he ventures

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 113, 114.

respecting Milton's character, that in opposing monarchy he looked chiefly, if not solely, at its expensiveness. But in warning his country in this treatise against a return to that form of government, he shows that economical reasons were the weakest by which he was influenced. "God," he says, "in much displeasure gave a king to the Israelites, and imputed it a sin to them that they sought one; but Christ apparently forbids his disciples to admit of any such heathenish government: 'The kings of the Gentiles,' saith he, 'exercise lordship over them,' and they that 'exercise authority upon them are called benefactors: but ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serveth.' The occasion of these his words was the ambitious desire of Zebedee's two sons to be exalted above their brethren in his kingdom, which they thought was to be ere long upon earth. That he speaks of civil government, is manifest by the former part of the comparison, which infers the other part to be always in the same kind. And what government comes nearer to this precept of Christ, than a free commonwealth; wherein they who are the greatest, are perpetual servants and drudges to the public at their own cost and charges, neglect their own affairs, yet are not elevated above their brethren; live soberly in their families, walk the street as other men, may be spoken to freely, familiarly, friendly, without adoration? Whereas a king must be adored like a demigod, with a dissolute and haughty court about him, of vast expense and luxury, masks and revels, to the debauching of our prime gentry, both male and female; not in their pastimes only, but in earnest, by the loose employments of court-service, which will be then thought honourable. . . . Certainly, then, that people must needs be mad or strangely infatuated, that build the chief hope of their common happiness or safety on a single person; who, if he happen to be good, can do no more than another man; if to be bad, hath in his hands to do more evil without check, than

millions of other men. The happiness of a nation must needs be firmest and certainest in full and free council of their own electing, where no single person, but reason only, sways. And what madness is it for them who might manage nobly their own affairs themselves, sluggishly and weakly to devolve all on a single person ; and, more like boys under age than men, to commit all to his patronage and disposal who neither can perform what he undertakes ; and yet for undertaking it, though royally paid, will not be their servant, but their lord ! How unmanly must it needs be, to count such a one the breath of our nostrils, to hang all our felicity on him, all our safety, our well-being, for which if we were aught else but sluggards or babies, we need depend on none but God and our own counsels, our own active virtue and industry. . . . It may be well wondered that any nation, styling themselves free, can suffer any man to pretend hereditary right over them as their lord ; whenas, by acknowledging that right, they conclude themselves his servants and his vassals, and so renounce their own freedom. Which how a people and their leaders especially can do, who have fought so gloriously for liberty ; how they can change their noble words and actions, heretofore so becoming the majesty of a free people, into the base necessity of court flatteries and prostrations, is not only strange and admirable, but lamentable to think on. That a nation should be so valorous and courageous to win their liberty in the field, and when they have won it, should be so heartless and unwise in their counsels, as not to know how to use it, value it, what to do with it, or with themselves ; but after ten or twelve years' prosperous war and contestation with tyranny, basely and besottedly to run their necks again into the yoke which they have broken, and prostrate all the fruits of their victory for nought at the feet of the vanquished, besides our loss of glory, and such an example as kings or tyrants never yet had the like to boast of, will be an ignominy if it befall us, that never yet befell any nation possessed of their liberty." *

* Prose Works, vol. ii., pp. 115, 116, 118, 119.

He does not, however, confine himself to general illustrations of the blessings of a commonwealth, but points out the special perils involved in the return of the deposed family. "But admit," he says, "that monarchy of itself may be convenient to some nations; yet to us who have thrown it out, received back again, it cannot but prove pernicious. For kings to come, never forgetting their former ejection, will be sure to fortify and arm themselves sufficiently for the future against all such attempts hereafter from the people; who shall be then so narrowly watched and kept so low, that though they would never so fain, and at the same rate of their blood and treasure, they never shall be able to regain what they now have purchased and may enjoy, or to free themselves from any yoke imposed upon them. Nor will they dare to go about it; utterly disheartened for the future, if these their highest attempts prove unsuccessful; which will be the triumph of all tyrants hereafter over any people that shall resist oppression; and their song will then be, to others, How sped the rebellious English? to our posterity, How sped the rebels, your fathers?" *

Having shown that that was the particular crisis, at which it would be easy to found a free commonwealth, he proceeds to show how especially such a form of government would conduce to those interests which he had through life regarded as supremely valuable. "This liberty of conscience," he says, "which, above all other things, ought to be to all men dearest and most precious, no government more inclinable not to favour alone, but to protect, than a free commonwealth; as being most magnanimous, most fearless, and confident of its own fair proceedings." This position he strengthens by showing how these rights were violated by Protestant Elizabeth, and then appeals: "What liberty of conscience can we then expect of others, far worse principled from the cradle, trained up and governed by popish and Spanish counsels, and on such depending hitherto for subsistence? Especially what can this last parliament expect,

who having revived lately and published the covenant, have re-engaged themselves never to readmit episcopacy? Which no son of Charles returning but will most certainly bring back with him, if he regard the last and strictest charge of his father, 'to persevere in, not the doctrine only, but government of the Church of England, not to neglect the speedy and effectual suppressing of errors and schisms;' among which he accounted presbytery one of the chief."*

He lastly proceeds to show that the same considerations applied to the civil rights and liberties of his countrymen, and concludes with the following prophetic language: "I have no more to say at present: few words will save us, well considered; few and easy things now seasonably done. But if the people be so affected as to prostitute religion and liberty to the vain and groundless apprehension, that nothing but kingship can restore trade, not remembering the frequent plagues and pestilences that then wasted this city, such as through God's mercy we never have felt since; and that trade flourishes nowhere more than in the free commonwealths of Italy, Germany, and the Low Countries, before their eyes at this day; yet if trade be grown so craving and importunate through the profuse living of tradesmen, that nothing can support it but the luxurious expenses of a nation upon trifles or superfluities; so as if the people generally should betake themselves to frugality, it might prove a dangerous matter, lest tradesmen should mutiny for want of trading; and that therefore we must forego and set to sale religion, liberty, honour, safety, all concernments divine or human, to keep up trading; if, lastly, after all this light among us, the same reason shall pass for current, to put our necks again under kingship, as was made use of by the Jews to return back to Egypt, and to the worship of their idol queen, because they falsely imagined that they then lived in more plenty and prosperity; our condition is not sound, but rotten, both in

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 134.

religion and all civil prudence; and will bring us soon, the way we are marching, to those calamities, which attend always and unavoidably on luxury, all national judgments under foreign and domestic slavery: so far we shall be from mending our condition by monarchizing our government, whatever new conceit now possesses us.

“However, with all hazard I have ventured what I thought my duty to speak in season, and to forewarn my country in time; wherein I doubt not but there be many wise men in all places and degrees, but am sorry the effects of wisdom are so little seen among us. Many circumstances and particulars I could have added in those things whereof I have spoken: but a few main matters now put speedily in execution, will suffice to recover us, and set all right: and there will want at no time who are good at circumstances; but men who set their minds on main matters, and sufficiently urge them, in these most difficult times I find not many.

“What I have spoken, is the language of that which is not called amiss ‘The good old Cause:’ if it seem strange to any, it will not seem more strange, I hope, than convincing to backsliders. Thus much I should perhaps have said, though I was sure I should have spoken only to trees and stones; and had none to cry to, but with the prophet, ‘O earth, earth, earth!’ to tell the very soil itself, what her perverse inhabitants are deaf to. Nay, though what I have spoke should happen (which Thou suffer not, who didst create mankind free! nor Thou next, who didst redeem us from being servants of men!) to be the last words of our expiring liberty.”*

And the last words of expiring liberty they were; for they terminated the political history of her noblest champion, and an enemy who had never felt the charm of her benign sway was already at the gates. His return was hailed by a people who judged themselves unworthy of

freedom, by an acquiescent army, and by the treacherous faction of loyalized presbyterians, more ignoble than all. Under such auspices, the most worthless of British monarchs was restored to the throne. "Then came those days never to be recalled without a blush—the days of servitude without loyalty, and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The King cringed to his rival that he might trample on his people, sunk into a Viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults, and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots, and the jests of buffoons, regulated the measures of a government which had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James—Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations." *

The Foreign Secretary who had stood forth before the eyes of Europe as the justifier of the execution of Charles I., and as the opponent of that prelatical tyranny which the Stuarts cherished as the bulwark of their own, was too conspicuous an offender not to be endangered by the Restoration. Accordingly, he quitted his residence in Petty France, and was secreted in the house of a friend in St. Bartholomew's Close, where he remained for about four months, until his safety was permanently secured by the passing of the Act of Oblivion, on the 29th August, 1660. His two great political works, the "Eikonoclastes" and the

* Edinburgh Review, vol. xlii., p. 337.

"Defence of the People of England," were condemned to be burnt by the hands of the common hangman; but at this insult Milton could well afford a contemptuous smile, even through the "natural tears" which he shed over the grave of departed freedom.

CHAPTER XVII.

MILTON'S CHANGES OF RESIDENCE—HIS THIRD MARRIAGE—HIS CON-
NEXION WITH ELLWOOD—REMOVAL TO CHALFONT—COMPLETES THE
"PARADISE LOST"—EARLY HISTORY OF THIS POEM—LETTER TO
HEIMBACH—"PARADISE REGAINED"—"SAMSON AGONISTES."

As soon as Milton was delivered from the perils in which so many whom he honoured and loved were involved by the vindictive cruelty of Charles II., he established himself in a house in Holborn, not far from Red Lion Square. From this he removed, after an occupation of about two years, to a vicinity to which, for some reason, he seems to have been partial. He had in earlier years resided in Aldersgate Street, Barbican, and Bartholomew Close, and in 1662 we find him in Jewin Street. His last removal was to no great distance from this spot; this was to a small house in Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields, where he spent the remainder of his days.

One interval, however, requiring especial observation, occurred during the period embraced in these notices of his latest places of residence. During the time of his abode in Jewin Street, he felt that his solitary condition, aggravated by the cold inattention of his daughters, required the solace of conjugal life. He accordingly requested his friend Dr. Paget to recommend him a suitable partner, and, by his advice, he married, as his third wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Edward Minshul, of Cheshire, a distant relation of Dr. Paget. Soon after this event Milton was offered the Foreign

Secretaryship, under the Government of Charles II., which he had filled with so much distinction in the time of the Commonwealth. His wife, dazzled by the prospect which this proposal opened before her, earnestly urged him to accede to it. This Milton peremptorily refused, adding, "You, as other women, would ride in your coach: my aim is to live and die an honest man."

The events of Milton's personal history for the few next years have been related without any material variation by all his biographers, and modern years have brought no accession of information respecting them. The statements of the best of these authors will therefore be collated in this place, with no other acknowledgment than a marginal reference. During his residence in Jewin Street, Ellwood the quaker was recommended to him as a person who, for the advantage of his conversation, would read to him such Latin books as he thought proper; an employment to which he attended every afternoon, except on Sundays. "At my first sitting to him," this ingenious writer informs us in his Life of himself, "observing that I used the English pronunciation, he told me, if I would have the benefit of the Latin tongue, not only to read and understand Latin authors, but to converse with foreigners, either abroad or at home, I must learn the foreign pronunciation; to this I consenting, he instructed me how to sound the vowels: this change of pronunciation proved a new difficulty to me; but '*labor omnia vincit improbus*;' and so did I; which made my reading the more acceptable to my master. He, on the other hand, perceiving with what earnest desire I pursued learning, gave me not only all the encouragement, but all the help, he could; for, *having a curious ear*, he understood by my tone when I understood what I read, and when I did not; and accordingly he would stop me, and examine me, and open the most difficult passages to me." The kind care bestowed by Milton upon the improvement of this young man, was repaid by every mark of personal

regard. The courtesy of the preceptor, and the gratitude of the disciple, are indeed alike conspicuous. After several adventures, which were no slight trials of patience, Ellwood found an asylum in the house of an affluent quaker at Chalfont, in Buckinghamshire, whose children he was to instruct. This situation afforded him an opportunity of being serviceable to Milton: for, when the plague began to rage in London in 1665, Ellwood took a house for him at Chalfont, St. Giles; to which the poet retired with his family. He had not long before removed from Jewin Street to a house in Artillery Walk, leading to Bunhill Fields; but he is also said, by Richardson, on the authority of a person who was acquainted with Milton, and who had often met him with his host conducting him, to have lodged awhile before this last removal, with Millington, the famous auctioneer of books; a man whose occupation and whose talents would render his company very acceptable to Milton; for he has been described by a contemporary pen as "a man of remarkable elocution, wit, sense, and modesty."*

On his arrival at Chalfont, Milton found that Ellwood, in consequence of a persecution of the quakers, was confined in the gaol of Aylesbury. But, being soon released, this affectionate friend made a visit to him, to welcome him into the country. "After some common discourses," says Ellwood, "had passed between us, he called for a manuscript of his, which, being brought, he delivered to me, bidding me take it home with me, and read it at my leisure, and when I had so done, return it to him with my judgment thereupon. When I came home, and set myself to read it, I found it was that excellent poem, which he entitled 'Paradise Lost.'"

"After I had with the best attention read it through," says the respectable Ellwood, "I made him another visit, and returned him his book, with due acknowledgment of the favour he had done me in communicating it to me. He

* Todd's Life of Milton, pp. 186 and 190.

asked me how I liked it, and what I thought of it: which I modestly and freely told him; and, after some further discourse, I pleasantly said to him, Thou hast said much here of Paradise lost, but what hast thou to say of Paradise found? He made me no answer, but sat some time in a muse: then broke off that discourse, and fell upon another subject. After the sickness was over, and the city well cleansed, and become safely habitable again, he returned thither; and when afterwards I went to wait upon him, (which I seldom failed of doing when my occasions led me to London), he showed me his second poem, called 'Paradise Regained,' and in a pleasant tone said to me, 'This is owing to you, for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of.'"

The term of Milton's residence at Chalfont has not been precisely specified; but from the circumstances to which it was accommodated, the prevalence and the extirpation of the plague in the capital, we may infer that it extended from the June or the July of 1665 to the March or April of the following year.

It is not exactly ascertained when the "Paradise Lost" was commenced; but there is every reason to believe that it was completed during this brief sojourn at Chalfont. On the 26th of April, 1667,* he sold the manuscript of the "Paradise Lost" to Samuel Simmons, the bookseller, for the insignificant sum of £5. But the agreement with the bookseller entitled him to a conditional payment of five pounds more when thirteen hundred copies should be sold of the first edition; of the like sum after the same number of the second edition; and of another five pounds after the same sale of the third. The number of each edition was not to exceed fifteen hundred copies. It first appeared in 1667, in ten books. The poem, in a small quarto form, and plainly but neatly bound, was advertised at the price of

* Symmons' Life of Milton, pp. 381, 382.

three shillings. The titles were varied, in order to circulate the edition, in 1667, 1668, and 1669. Of these there were no less than *five*. In two years the sale gave the poet a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in small octavo; and, by a judicious division of the seventh and tenth, contained twelve books. He lived not to receive the payment stipulated for this impression. The third edition was published in 1678; and his widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, agreed with Simmons, the printer, to receive eight pounds for her right, according to her receipt, dated December 21, 1680; and gave him a general release, dated April 29, 1681. Simmons covenanted to transfer the right, for twenty-five pounds, to Brabazon Aylmer, a bookseller; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half of it, August 17, 1683, and the other half, March 24, 1690, at a price very considerably advanced.*

An anecdote has been related by Richardson, one of his earlier biographers, "that Sir John Denham came into the House one morning with a sheet of '*Paradise Lost*,' wet from the press, in his hand; and, being asked what it was, he replied, '*Part of the noblest poem that ever was written in any language or in any age.*'" However, the book remained unknown till it was produced about *two years afterwards* by Lord Buckhurst on the following occasion. That nobleman, in company with Mr. Fleetwood Shephard, (who frequently told the story to Dr. Tancred Robinson, an eminent physician, and Mr. Richardson's informer), looking over some books in Little Britain, met with '*Paradise Lost*;' and, being surprised with some passages in turning it over, bought it. The bookseller requested his lordship to speak in its favour, if he liked it: for *the impression lay on his hands as waste paper*. Lord Buckhurst, (whom Richardson inaccurately calls the Earl of Dorset, for he did

* Todd's Life of Milton, pp. 194, 195.

not succeed to that title till some years afterwards), having read the poem, sent it to Dryden, who in a short time returned it with this answer: '*This man cuts us all out, and the ancients too.*'"*

Although there is, doubtless, a foundation of truth in the former anecdote, the association of Sir John Denham's name with the fact is certainly erroneous, as that gentleman never was in Parliament. Shortly afterwards, however, Dryden called upon the author, and obtained his permission to construct a drama, or rather an opera, upon the great epic. This did not appear during Milton's life; but, in the preface, a due homage is paid to his genius. Although the poem passed through six editions within twenty years of its publication, it cannot be said to have obtained the attention it deserved, until it was popularized by the criticisms of Addison.

It would be a waste of time to descant on the innumerable merits of a poem which has been made the theme of almost every critic of eminence for upwards of a century, and which now enjoys an undisputed supremacy. That it should not have been popular in the days of the two last Stuarts, is not matter of surprise. The age of tyranny was not likely to favour the writings of the apostle of freedom. The age of sensuality was incapable of relishing the moral beauties and intellectual charms of Milton's muse. It was reserved to a brighter and a better age to render justice to the memory of the Patriot-Bard; and, perhaps, it is safe to predict that the estimation of Milton's poetry will afford the measure of the literary refinement, and that of his prose writings will gauge the political elevation or decline, of every succeeding age in this country.

Mr. Philips has mentioned one singular circumstance with respect to the composition of the "Paradise Lost," "which," he says, "I have a particular reason to remember; for whereas I had the perusal of it from the very beginning, for some years,

* Todd's Life of Milton, pp. 204, 205.

as I went from time to time to visit him, in parcels of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time (which, being written by whatever hand came next, might possibly want correction as to the orthography and pointing), having, as the summer came on, not been shown any for a considerable while, and desiring the reason thereof, was answered, that his vein never happily flowed but from the Autumnal Equinox to the Vernal; and that whatever he attempted at other times was never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much; so that, in all the years he was about this poem, he may be said to have spent half his time therein.”*

“Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition,” says Johnson, “we have little account.” Richardson, however, relates “that he would sometimes lie awake whole nights, but not a verse could he make; and on a sudden his poetical faculty would rush upon him with an *impetus*, or *æstrum*; and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came. In dictating in the day, he was accustomed to sit leaning back, in an easy chair, with his leg flung over the elbow of it, and at such times he would dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number.

Newton, in his Life of the poet, states that “Mrs. Milton, who survived her husband, in a state of widowhood, nearly fifty-five years, related that he composed principally in the winter; and on his waking in the morning would make her write down sometimes twenty or thirty verses. On being asked whether he did not frequently read Homer and Virgil, she replied that ‘he stole from nobody but the muse who inspired him.’ To a lady inquiring who the muse was, she answered, ‘it was God’s grace, and the Holy Spirit that visited him nightly.’

During Milton’s residence at Chalfont, a report obtained currency that he had perished by the plague; which need occasion the less surprise as the parish registers show, that

* Johnson’s Lives^o of the Poets, vol. i. pp. 189, 190.

that village did not escape the ravages of this calamitous visitation. This report appears to have reached the Continent, and elicited from several eminent men letters of inquiry respecting the safety of so valuable a life. The last of the poet's familiar letters which we possess, is an answer to one of these. It is addressed, "To the most accomplished Peter Heimbach, Counsellor of State to the Elector of Brandenburg," and having been written in Latin, is presented by Mr. Todd in the following translation:—

"That, in a year so pestilential and so fatal as the present, amidst the deaths of so many of my compatriots, you should have believed me likewise, as you write me word, in consequence too of some rumour or other, to have fallen a victim, excites in me no surprise: and if that rumour owed its currency among you, as it seems to have done, to an anxiety for my welfare, I feel flattered by it as an instance of your friendly regard. Through the goodness of God, however, who had provided me with a safe retreat in the country, I still live and am well; and would that I could add, not incompetent to any duty which it may be my further destiny to discharge.

"But that after so long an interval I should have recurred to your remembrance, is highly gratifying to me; though to judge from your eloquent embellishments of the matter, when you profess your admiration of so many different virtues united in my single person, you seem to furnish some ground for suspecting that I have, indeed, escaped from your recollection. From such a number of unions, in fact, I should have cause to dread a progeny too numerous, were it not admitted that in disgrace and adversity the virtues principally increase and flourish. One of them, however, has not made me any very grateful return for her entertainment; for she whom you call the political (though I would rather that you had termed her love of country), after seducing me with her fine name, has nearly, if I may so express myself, deprived me of a country. The rest,

indeed, harmonise more perfectly together. Our country is wherever we can live as we ought.

"Before I conclude, I must prevail on you to impute whatever incorrectness of orthography or of punctuation you may discover in this epistle, to my young amanuensis; whose total ignorance of Latin has imposed on me the disagreeable necessity of actually dictating to him every individual letter.

"That your deserts as a man, consistently with the high promise with which you raised my expectations in your youth, should have elevated you to so eminent a station in your sovereign's favour, gives me the most sincere pleasure; and I fervently pray and trust that you may proceed and prosper. Farewell!—London, August 15, 1666."

In the year 1670, Milton published his fragment of the History of England, the earlier portion of which has been noticed already, and which his subsequent intervals of labour only brought down to the period at which the strictly national interest of our annals commences—that of the victory of William of Normandy at the Battle of Hastings. In the following year he published the "Paradise Regained," and the dramatic poem entitled "Samson Agonistes."

Had Milton never written the "Paradise Lost," it is more than probable that the "Paradise Regained" would have been rewarded with the admiration of posterity, and secured for its author a high rank among epic poets. Some fond admirers of Milton have endeavoured to attract to it some portion of that voluntary tribute which is universally paid to its great predecessor. Jortin has eulogised it; Dunster has laboured to develop its previously unrecognized beauties; and Warburton has pronounced it a charming poem, nothing inferior in the poetry and the sentiments to the "Paradise Lost." But these panegyrics have never received that endorsement which, in the republic of letters, is the sole, and, indeed, the just, ratification of purely literary excellence. Perhaps the truth

is, that the "Paradise Lost" satiates every faculty to which it appeals,* and renders the revival of the zest impossible, except by a power analogous to that which was exerted in the miracle of Cana. Nevertheless, it contains passages of great beauty and grandeur; and one which shows to what an extent he retained, irrepressible amidst the decay of nature, the principles which had governed his more active life, deserves on that account to be inserted in this place. The sentiment is put into the mouth of the Saviour:—

"Extol not riches, then, the toil of fools,
The wise man's cumbrance, if not snare; more apt
To slacken virtue, and abate her edge,
Than prompt her to do aught may merit praise.
What if with like aversion I reject
Riches and realms? Yet not, for that a crown,
Golden in show, is but a wreath of thorns,
Brings dangers, troubles, cares, and sleepless nights,
To him who wears the regal diadem,
When on his shoulders each man's burden lies;
For therein stands the office of a king,
His honour, virtue, merit, and chief praise,
That for the public all this weight he bears.
Yet he who reigns within himself, and rules
Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king,
Which every wise and virtuous man attains;
And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
Cities of men or headstrong multitudes,
Subjects himself to anarchy within,
Or lawless passions in him, which he serves.
But to guide nations in the way of truth,
By saving doctrine, and from error lead,
To know, and, knowing, worship God aright,
Is yet more kingly; this attracts the soul,
Governs the inner man, the nobler part:
That other o'er the body only reigns,
And oft by force; which to a generous mind,
So reigning, can be no sincere delight;
Besides, to give a kingdom hath been thought
Greater and nobler done, and to lay down
Far more magnanimous, than to assume."

* *Omne supervacuum pleno de pectore manat.*—HORACE.

Throughout the writings of Milton, we have seen his complete familiarity and intense sympathy with classical literature, producing two characteristic results:—the one, the infusion of beautiful, but exotic, and, in many cases, recondite illustration; the other, the interpolation into his style of that which, in the view of mere nationality, must be regarded as a corrupt element. It has been remarked of the “Paradise Regained,” that its style “is much less encumbered with allusions to abstruse learning, than the ‘Paradise Lost.’” Different critics assign different reasons for this. It is probable that the poet was influenced by regard to the simple language of the New Testament: in previous parts of the Bible, there is much more of poetical ornament and figurative richness.”

The defect of the “Samson Agonistes” is not one of style, but of structure. It is framed on the model of the Greek drama, which, if not incompatible with our language, is certainly uncongenial with the national literature and the popular taste. The great masters of the British drama, both prior and subsequent to the days of Milton, do not admit to the vicinity of their imperial throne the rivalry of classic antiquity. As the “Paradise Regained” admitted of the development of some of Milton’s political and religious opinions, so among the more individual delineations of the “Samson,” we find some passages in which it is impossible not to perceive a reference to the author’s personal and domestic condition. Of this the following is an obvious example:—

“ I, dark in light, exposed
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
Within doors or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own ;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon !
Irrevocably dark, total eclipse,
Without all hope of day!”

Like every other work of Milton, the “Samson Agonistes” abounds with noble sentiments, and with passages of great poetic force and beauty ; but a character of tame inefficacy attaches to every dramatic composition which is not adapted to the stage. In this instance, too, the irregularity of the ode interferes with the measured and progressive movement of the tragic muse ; and, as a dramatic composition, the just decision of the literary world has pronounced it a failure.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MILTON PUBLISHES HIS TREATISE OF TRUE RELIGION, HERESY, SCHISM, TOLERATION, ETC.—ANALYSIS OF THE WORK—MINOR PUBLICATIONS—RECENT DISCOVERY OF THE TWO BOOKS ON THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE SERVICE OF GOD—NOTICE OF THE MAIN DOCTRINES ASSERTED IN THE WORK—MILTON'S RELIGIOUS CHARACTER—HIS DEATH—DESCRIPTION OF HIS PERSON AND HABITS—CONCLUSION.

IN 1673, Milton, impressed with alarm at the rapid increase of Popery, and regarding its re-establishment in England as involving a retrogression from a pure and free religion, to superstition, infidelity, and spiritual despotism, put forth a tract entitled "Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and what Best Means may be used against the growth of Popery." A few selections from this treatise will indicate the course of his argument: "True religion," he lays down at the outset, "is the true worship and service of God, learned and believed from the Word of God only.

. . . With good and religious reason, therefore, all Protestant churches, with one consent, and particularly the Church of England, in her Thirty-nine Articles (Article 6th, 19th, 20th, 21st, and elsewhere), maintain these two points, as the main principles of true religion—that the rule of true religion is the Word of God only; and that their faith ought not to be an implicit faith, that is, to believe, though as the church believes, against or without express authority of Scripture. And if all Protestants, as universally as they hold these two principles, so attentively and religiously would observe them, they would avoid and cut off

many debates and contentions, schisms and persecutions, which too oft have been among them, and more firmly unite against the common adversary. For hence it directly follows, that no true Protestant can persecute, or not tolerate, his fellow-Protestant, though dissenting from him in some opinions, but he must flatly deny and renounce these two his own main principles, whereon true religion is founded; while he compels his brother from that which he believes as the manifest word of God, to an implicit faith (which he himself condemns), to the endangering of his brother's soul, whether by rash belief or outward conformity: for 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin.'

"I will now as briefly show what is false religion, or heresy, which will be done as easily; for of contraries the definitions must needs be contrary. Heresy, therefore, is a religion taken up and believed from the traditions of men, and additions to the Word of God. . . . Schism is a rent or division in the church, when it comes to the separating of congregations; and may also happen to a true church, as well as to a false; yet in the true needs not tend to the breaking of communion, if they can agree in the right administration of that wherein they communicate, keeping their other opinions to themselves, not being destructive to faith. The Pharisees and Sadducees were two sects, yet both met together in their common worship of God at Jerusalem. But here the Papist will angrily demand, What! are Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Socinians, Arminians, no heretics? I answer, All these may have some errors, but are no heretics. Heresy is in the will and choice professedly against Scripture; error is against the will, in misunderstanding the Scripture after all sincere endeavours to understand it rightly: hence it was said well by one of the ancients, 'Err I may, but heretic I will not be.' It is a human frailty to err, and no man is infallible here on earth. But so long as all these profess to set the Word of God only before them as the rule of faith

and obedience; and use all diligence and sincerity of heart, by reading, by learning, by study, by prayer for illumination of the Holy Spirit, to understand the rule and obey it, they have done what man can do: God will assuredly pardon them, as he did the friends of Job; good and pious men, though much mistaken, as there it appears, in some points of doctrine.”*

Referring next to the intolerance of the Papists, he says:—

“But he is wont to say, he enjoins only things indifferent. Let them be so still; who gave him authority to change their nature by enjoining them? If by his own principles, as is proved, he ought to tolerate controverted points of doctrine not slightly grounded on Scripture, much more ought he not impose things indifferent without Scripture. In religion nothing is indifferent; but if it come once to be imposed, is either a command or a prohibition, and so consequently an addition to the Word of God, which he professes to disallow. Besides, how unequal, how uncharitable must it needs be, to impose that which his conscience cannot urge him to impose, upon him whose conscience forbids him to obey! What can it be but love of contention for things not necessary to be done, to molest the conscience of his brother, who holds them necessary to be not done?”†

Milton next comes to the question whether Popery should or should not be tolerated by a Christian government, and in this sole instance appears to have been swayed, at this period of his life, rather by an absorbing love of the truth, than by confidence in its self-sustaining power. He certainly condemns and deprecates the infliction of pains and penalties on Roman Catholics for what can properly be called the exercise of their religion; but he considers that their political tenets place them without the boundary of toleration, and that their idolatrous use of images, &c., should be repressed as a public offence against Almighty

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 510, 511.

† Ibid. p. 513.

God, and as held by themselves as "not necessary to salvation, but only enjoined them by tradition."

"The next means," he says, "to hinder the growth of Popery will be, to read duly and diligently the Holy Scriptures, which, as St. Paul saith to Timothy, who had known them from a child, 'are able to make wise unto salvation.' And to the whole church of Colossi: 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you plentifully, with all wisdom,' Col. iii. 16. The Papal Antichristian church permits not her laity to read the Bible in their own tongue: our church, on the contrary, hath proposed it to all men, and to this end translated it into English, with profitable notes on what is met with obscure, though what is most necessary to be known be still plainest; that all sorts and degrees of men, not understanding the original, may read it in their mother tongue. Neither let the countryman, the tradesman, the lawyer, the physician, the statesman, excuse himself by his much business from the studious reading thereof."*

The treatise concludes with a powerful enforcement of the position, that "The last means to avoid Popery is, to amend our lives. It is a general complaint, that this nation, of late years, is grown more numerous and excessively vicious than heretofore; pride, luxury, drunkenness, whoredom, cursing, swearing, bold and open atheism, everywhere abounding: where these grow, no wonder if Popery also grow apace. There is no man so wicked but sometimes his conscience will wring him with thoughts of another world, and the peril of his soul; the trouble and melancholy, which he conceives of true repentance and amendment, he endures not, but inclines rather to some carnal superstition, which may pacify and lull his conscience with some more pleasing doctrine. None more ready and officious to offer herself than the Romish, and opens wide her office, with all her faculties, to receive him; easy confession, easy absolution, pardons, indulgences, masses for him both quick and dead,

* Prose Works, vol. ii. p. 516.

Agnus Deis, relics, and the like: and he, instead of 'working out his salvation with fear and trembling,' straight thinks in his heart (like another kind of fool than he in the Psalms,) to bribe God as a corrupt judge; and by his proctor, some priest, or friar, to buy out his peace with money, which he cannot with his repentance. . . . Let us, therefore, using this last means, last here spoken of, but first to be done, amend our lives with all speed; lest through impenitency we run into that stupidity which we now seek all means so warily to avoid, the worst of superstitions, and the heaviest of all God's judgments—Popery."*

In concluding these notices of Milton's writings, it is necessary to gather up one or two minor publications. About the time of his last marriage, he published a short treatise, entitled "Accidence commenced Grammar," which is no otherwise remarkable than as exhibiting a mighty mind condescending to the humblest spheres of useful exertion.

In the same year he published a manuscript of Sir Walter Raleigh, with the title of "Aphorisms of State."

In 1672 we find him again devoting his pen to the interests of education, in a treatise inscribed, "*Artis Logicæ plenior institutio ad Petri Rami methodum concinnata.*" That is, a scheme of logic digested on the plan of Ramus (a Frenchman, whose vernacular name was De la Ramee). In addition to these works, two were published posthumously. The first of these was given to the world about eight years after the death of Milton, and is entitled, "The Brief History of Moscovia, and of other less-known Countries lying eastward of Russia, as far as Cathay." The second requires a more particular notice.

In the year 1823, Mr. Lemon, the Deputy-Keeper of State Papers, discovered, in his researches in the old State Paper Office at Whitehall, a packet wrapped in what proved to be proof-sheets of the "Elzevir Horace;" this

* Prose Works, vol. ii. pp. 518, 519.

was inclosed in a cover directed to Mr. Skinner, merchant, the same Cyriac Skinner to whom Milton addressed his sonnet on his blindness. The packet was found to contain the State Letters of Milton, and a manuscript entitled, "Idea Theologiæ," of Milton's authorship, of which there exists abundant evidence, both external and internal. It constitutes a complete body of divinity, consisting of two books: the first "On the Knowledge of God," and the second "On the Service of God:" the former divided into thirty-three, and the latter into seventeen, chapters. The translation and editing of this manuscript was confided by George IV. to Mr. Sumner, afterwards Bishop of Winchester, by whom it was published in 1825. A few sentences from the most important chapters must suffice to indicate the theological views of Milton at the closing period of his life.

On the Divine Nature he says:—"Our safest way is to form in our minds such a conception of God as shall correspond with his own delineation and representation of himself in the sacred writings. For it is on this very account that he has lowered himself to our level, lest in our flights above the reach of human understanding, and beyond the written word of Scripture, we should be tempted to indulge in vague cogitations and subtleties."

In the chapter, "On the Divine Decrees," he says, "It is to be understood that God decreed nothing absolutely, which he left in the power of free agents: a doctrine which is shown by the whole canon of Scripture. . . . God had determined from all eternity, that man should so far be a free agent, that it remained with himself to decide whether he would stand or fall. . . . God of his wisdom determined to create men and angels reasonable beings and therefore free agents."

And in the chapter on Predestination: "Without searching deeper into this subject, let us be contented with only knowing, that God, out of his infinite mercy and grace

in Christ, has predestinated to salvation all who should believe."

On the Nature and Work of Christ, he says: "This point appears certain, notwithstanding the arguments of some of the moderns to the contrary, that the Son existed in the beginning, under the name of the *logos* or word, and was the first of the whole creation, by whom afterwards all other things were made both in heaven and earth." And again: "The mediatorial office of Christ is that whereby, at the special appointment of God the Father, he voluntarily performed, and continues to perform, on behalf of man, whatever is requisite for obtaining reconciliation with God, and eternal salvation. . . . The exaltation of Christ is that by which, having triumphed over death, and laid aside the form of a servant, he was exalted by God the Father to a state of immortality and of the highest glory, partly by his own merits, partly by the gift of the Father, for the benefit of mankind; wherefore he rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God." Again: "As Christ emptied himself in both his natures, so both participate in his exaltation; his Godhead, by its restoration and manifestation; his manhood, by an accession of glory." And again: "The satisfaction of Christ is the complete reparation made by him, in his twofold capacity of God and Man, by the fulfilment of the law and payment of the required price for all mankind."

Dr. Johnson, whose injustice to the memory of Milton has been so frequently noticed, nowhere betrays a more total want of sympathy with his character, than in his remarks on his religious habits. "He did not associate himself," says the Doctor, "with any denomination of Protestants; we know rather what he was not, than what he was. He was not of the Church of Rome; he was not of the Church of England.

"To be of no church, is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by

faith and hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpresed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours, there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household; omitting public prayers, he omitted all." *

Than these bold statements, nothing can be imagined more absurdly gratuitous. The assertion that Milton omitted periodical religious observances in his family, though not improbable, is altogether unauthorized; while the assertion that he neglected the duty of prayer, is, even on Johnson's showing of Milton's character, so inconsistent, and so utterly unfounded withal, as to be absolutely ridiculous.

It can hardly be imagined that the consideration of what posterity might think of his religious character ever crossed the mind of Milton. Still we find in the work before us a passage throwing some light on this matter, which deserves consideration:—

“‘Although,’ he says, ‘it is the duty of believers to join themselves, if possible, to a church duly constituted (Heb. v. 25), yet such as cannot do this conveniently, or with full satisfaction of conscience, are not to be considered as excluded from the blessing bestowed by God on the churches.’† This is an important passage, Dr. Sumner says, ‘because it discloses Milton’s real views upon a point on which his opinions have been represented in a more unfavourable light than they seem to have deserved.’ Bishop Newton remarks,

* Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*, vol. i. pp. 215, 216.

† *Idea Theologiæ*, B. i. ch. 29.

, that in the latter part of his life, Milton was not a professed member of any particular sect of Christians, that he frequented no public worship, nor used any religious rite in his family. Whether so many different forms of worship as he had seen had made him indifferent to all forms; or whether he thought that all Christians had in some things corrupted the purity and simplicity of the Gospel; or whether he disliked their endless and uncharitable disputes, and that love of dominion and inclination to persecution, which he said was a piece of popery inseparable from all churches; or whether he believed that a man might be a good Christian without joining in any communion; or whether he did not look upon himself inspired, as wrapt up in God, and above all forms and ceremonies, it is not easy to determine: *to his own Master he standeth or falleth*: but if he was of any denomination, he was a sort of Quietist, and was full of the interior of religion, though he so little regarded the exterior.' It has been candidly and judiciously stated, in a note upon this passage, by Mr. Hawkins, to which Dr. Sumner refers, 'that the reproach which has been thrown upon Milton, of frequenting no place of public worship in his latter days, should be received, as Dr. Symmons observes, with some caution. His blindness and other infirmities might be in part his excuse; and it is certain that his daily employments were always ushered in by devout meditation and study of the Scriptures.' This observation, too, may be strengthened by Milton's expressly admitting, in the present treatise, the duty of uniting in practice external and internal worship, (B. ii. ch. 4.) though he also says, that 'with regard to the place of prayer, all are equally suitable,' as in his 'Paradise Lost' he makes a similar assertion (B. xi. 836)."

It is not surprising that Milton's religious character should have been thus misunderstood, and especially by Johnson. That the latter was a devout man, need not be questioned; but his religion seems to have been made up,

in no small measure, of a gloomy and temperamental fear of God; while his theological views were singularly limited and crude. In the view of Milton, religion was an intimately and intensely personal thing: with Johnson it was corporative and national. Milton's religion was, except in its expansive tendencies, a solitary spirituality: Johnson's coarsely effloresced in material and obtrusive mechanism. In the realm of conscience, freedom was with Milton a sacred passion: subservience was with Johnson a stolid fate. No wonder that Milton was misunderstood, not only by Johnson, but by numerous biographers besides. It requires some sympathy with his sentiments, to enable us to perceive that his religion was the result of Divine grace, operating on a mind inspired with the highest order of genius, and endowed with the most elaborately cultivated taste. The former would lead him to eschew the coarse materialism of the then established churches; and the latter would incline him to withdraw, though in a spirit of respectful and affectionate consideration, from a community whose unseemly management of church affairs resulted from the combination of very slender qualifications, with the most fervid religious zeal, and an intense and most natural hatred of spiritual tyranny. Such a character was too vast to be weighed in any balances available to a mind like Johnson's. He had nothing to draw with, and the well was deep. His criticisms remind us of the satire of Bishop Watson on the geologists of his day, whom he compares to a gnat on the back of an elephant, pronouncing on his interior anatomy from the appearances it observed upon his hide.

To this I shall only add a single sentence, illustrative of Milton's views of ministerial qualifications. "Any believer," he says, "is competent to act as an ordinary minister, according as convenience may require; provided only he be endowed with the necessary gifts; these gifts constituting his mission."

Milton's last publications were given to the world in the year 1674, which terminated his career. These were entitled respectively, "*Epistolarum Familiarium Liber unus*," and "*Prolusiones quædam Oratoriæ in Collegio Christi habitæ*," both of which have been already sufficiently noticed. In November of this year, the gout, from which he had long suffered, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of life, and he expired so peacefully that the attendants in his chamber were not aware of the precise time of his departure. On the 12th of that month, his remains were interred, beside those of his father, in a vault in Cripplegate church. The chief monumental memorials of him are a bust from the chisel of Bacon, in the same church, and a monument in Westminster Abbey, which bears the following needlessly-apologetic inscription from the pen of Dr. George, Provost of King's College, Cambridge:—

"*Augusti regum cineres, sanctæque favillæ
Heroum! vosque O venerandi nominis umbræ!
Parcite quod vestris infensum regibus olim
Sedibus infertur nomen; liceatque supremis
Funeribus finire odia, et mors obruat iras.
Nunc sub fœderibus coëant felicibus unâ
Libertas et jus sacri inviolabile sceptri.
Rege sub Augusto fas sit laudare Catonem.*"

"Ashes of regal and of holy fame,
Forgive the intrusion of a hostile name!
Cease human enmities with human life!
And Death, the great composer, calm your strife!
Lo! now the king's and people's rights agree:
In freedom's hand the hallow'd sceptre see!
No jealous fears alarm these happier days:
And our AUGUSTUS smiles at CATO's praise."

The person of Milton was singularly beautiful, and his complexion especially was so fine as to give him an appearance of juvenility in middle life. His eyes were dark grey, and retained their lustre after their vision was extinguished. His hair, which was light brown, he wore parted at the top, and "clustering," as he describes that of Adam,

upon his shoulders. His person was of the middle height, not fat or corpulent, but muscular and compact. His deportment, according to his contemporary, Wood, was affable, and his gait erect and manly, bespeaking courage and undauntedness. His ordinary habits are described with little variation by all his biographers. In his earlier life he was fond of robust exercises, and excelled in the management of the sword, which he commonly wore by his side. When blindness and the gout, with which he was early afflicted, confined him in a great degree to his house, he contrived a swing for the purposes of exercise; and to exercise, in one form or another, as the essential preservative of health, he regularly allotted one hour in the day.* Having injured his constitution in his youth by night studies, whence immediately proceeded those pains in his head of which we have before spoken, and that weakness in his eyes which terminated in the loss of sight, he corrected this practice as he advanced in years, and retired to his bed at the early hour of nine. He rose, however, as early as four o'clock in the summer, and five in the winter. The opening of his day was uniformly consecrated to religion. A chapter of the Hebrew Scriptures being read to him as soon as he was up, he passed the subsequent interval, till seven o'clock, in private meditation. From seven till twelve o'clock he either listened while some author was read to him, or dictated, as some friendly hand supplied him with its pen. At twelve commenced his hour of exercise, which before his blindness was commonly passed in walking, and afterwards, for the most part, in the swing. His early and frugal dinner succeeded, and when it was finished, he resigned himself to the recreation of music. His voice, Richardson remarks, was delicately sweet and harmonious, and he would frequently accompany the instruments on which he played—the bass viol or the organ. From this he returned with fresh vigour to the exercise of

* These and the following particulars are taken from Dr. Symmons' Life of Milton.

his intellect ; to his books, or his composition. At six, he admitted the visits of his friends. He ordinarily took his supper at eight, and, having smoked a pipe, retired to rest at nine o'clock. The privacy of Milton's style of life in Bunhill Fields did not seclude him from the attentions of the learned and the noble. It is even said that curiosity led the two princes, Charles and James, to pay a visit to the aged bard. The story goes, that "the Duke of York expressed one day to the king, his brother, a great desire to see old Milton, of whom he had heard so much. The king replied that he felt no objection to the duke's satisfying his curiosity : and, accordingly, soon afterwards, James went privately to Milton's house, where, after an introduction which explained to the old republican the rank of his guest, a free conversation ensued between these very dissimilar and discordant characters. In the course, however, of the conversation, the duke asked Milton whether he did not regard the loss of his eyesight as a judgment inflicted on him for what he had written against the late king. Milton's reply was to this effect :—' If your highness thinks that the calamities which befall us here are indications of the wrath of Heaven, in what manner are we to account for the fate of the king your father ? The displeasure of Heaven must, upon this supposition, have been much greater against him than against me—for I have lost only my eyes, but he lost his head.' "

Richardson also informs us that he might be seen sitting before his door, in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm, sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air ; and so, as well as in his own room, receiving the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality : and his funeral, as Toland informs us, was attended "by all the author's great and learned friends in London, not without a friendly concourse of the vulgar."

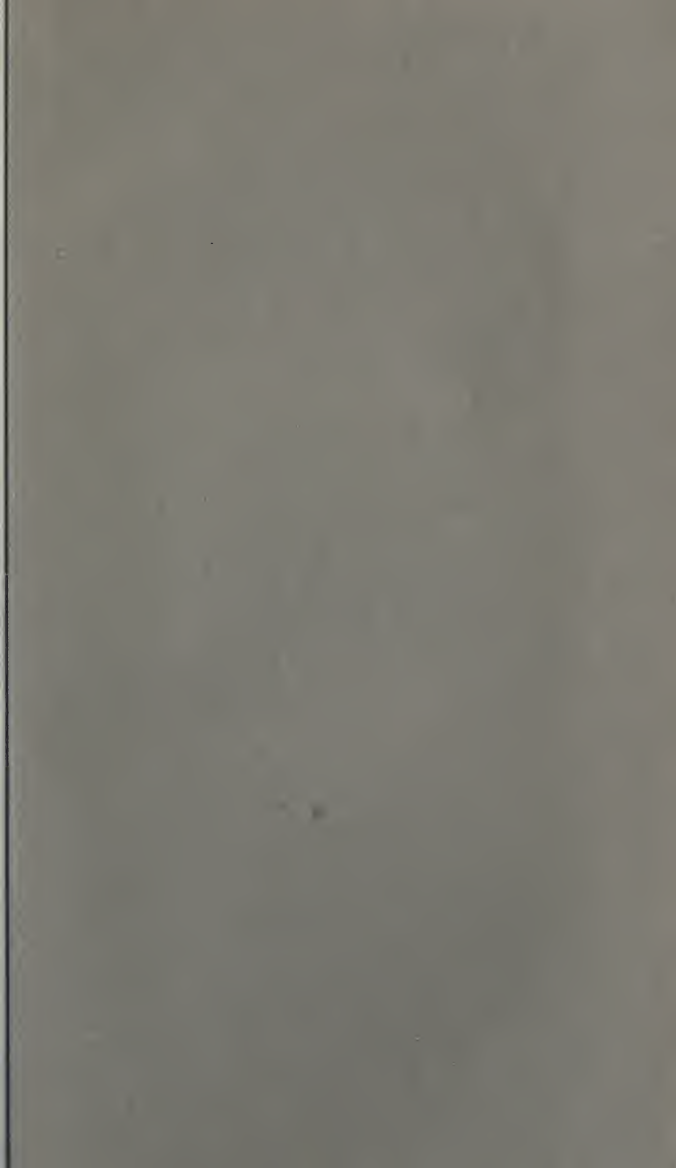
Such was Milton—a man than whom England never

* Symmons' Life of Milton, pp. 377, 378.

produced another more worthy of her pride—a man raised by his endowments almost above the level and the lot of humanity—in whom a genius that resembled inspiration, and attainments which might have been thought too various and extensive for human capacity, were sanctified by the grace of God, and devoted to the freedom, the advancement, and the happiness of man. “A man,” says his fondest biographer, “who, if he had been delegated as the representative of his species to one of the superior worlds, would have suggested a grand idea of the human race, as of beings affluent with moral and intellectual treasure, who were raised and distinguished in the universe as the favourites and the heirs of heaven.” With the eloquent Macaulay, we do not envy “the man who can study either the life or the writings of the great poet and patriot, without aspiring to emulate, not, indeed, the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he laboured for the public good—the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity—the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers—the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants—and the faith which he solemnly kept with his country and with his fame.”

THE END.





RETURN CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT TO → 202 Main Library

LIBRARY NO. 100
DATE RECEIVED

RECEIVED BY
LIBRARIAN'S SIGNATURE

ALL BOOKS MUST BE RETURNED WITHIN THE
STAMPED DATE. IF NOT, THE BOOK WILL
BE CONSIDERED LOST AND THE BORROWER
WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COST.

DUE AS STAMPED

NOV 10 1961

NOV 10 1961

YA 02038

U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



061341251

